

Where there's smoke, there's fire: The effect of truncated testimony on juror decision making

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Abstract

Many countries around the world have modified their legislation to allow child complainants of abuse to present their evidence-in-chief via pre-recorded videotape, or through closed-circuit-television (CCTV), rather than through live testimony, which has been shown to be stressful for children. With this modification, many countries also allow for childrens' videotaped evidence to be truncated for relevance or admissibility purposes. In the two experiments, we examined whether truncating testimony influenced how mock jurors rated the credibility of a 6-year-old child complainant when her testimony contained the primary core allegation only, or when the testimony was presented with either one or two additional—but less plausible—allegations. We also examined how mock jurors rated the guilt or innocence of the defendant. Contrary to what we predicted, we found that participants believed the child's core allegation, regardless of whether or not it was presented with additional less plausible allegations. Moreover, jurors who read the transcripts containing multiple allegations of abuse were more likely to find the defendant guilty of the core allegation than were jurors who read the core allegation only. These findings suggest that the truncation of testimony may affect the outcome of a trial; however, more research is needed on the effects of truncated testimony on juror decision-making as we continue to try to make the criminal justice system as fair as possible for all of those involved.

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When a witness appears in court, he or she testifies in front of a number of people including lawyers, the judge, and most importantly, the jury. New Zealand has an adversarial judicial system whereby there is a legal argument between two parties: the prosecution and the defence (Ministry of Justice, 2014). At trial, these two opposing parties present their arguments and their evidence to the judge and the jury. After a witness has provided his or her testimony in court, he or she is cross-examined by the opposing lawyer. The purpose of cross-examination is for the opposing party to scrutinise, challenge, and test the reliability of a witness' evidence (Ministry of Justice, 2014). Once all the evidence has been heard, the jury or a judge must reach a verdict of guilt or innocence on the part of the defendant (Ministry of Justice, 2014).

Since the 1960's, there have been concerns about the way in which children were treated when they appear as witnesses in the criminal court in New Zealand (Bala, 1999; Bennett, 2003; Brennan & Brenham, 1988; Cashmore & Bussey, 1996; Cashmore & Trimboli, 2006; Eastwood & Patton, 2002; Gupta, 1994; Landstrom & Granhag, 2010; ; Law Foundation New Zealand, 2010; Pipe & Henaghan, 1996; Powell, Wright, & Hughes-Scholes, 2011; Scott, 1994; Zajac, O'Neill, & Hayne, 2012). Traditionally, children provided their testimony to the court in the same manner as adults—by standing in the witness stand unshielded from the defendant and the jury while they were asked questions by both the defence and prosecution lawyer (Pipe & Henaghan, 1996). In addition, in cases involving a child witness, the judge was allowed to warn the jury at the start of the trial that because children are likely to fantasise and distort evidence, they should be suspicious of a child's testimony (Pipe & Henaghan, 1996).

Many decades of research have now shown that there are a number of problems with the way in which child witnesses were traditionally treated in the courtroom (Cashmore, 1992; Davies et al., 1990; Flin, 1990; Hill & Hill, 1987; Murray, 1995; Ministry of Justice,

2014; Pipe & Henaghan, 1996; Tillet, 2011). Testifying in court is stressful for most people, but it can be particularly stressful for children, who often do not understand the process and may be intimidated by the formality of the proceedings (Bala, 1999; Cashmore, 1992; Davies, 1992; Flin, 1990; Goodman, Taub, Jones, England, Port, Rudy, & Prado, 1992; Hall & Sales, 2008; Hill & Hill, 1987; Murray, 1995; Pipe & Henaghan, 1996; Powell et al, 2011; Underwager & Wakefield, 1992). In addition, it was not uncommon for there to be a long delay between the child's initial allegation and the trial where the child was required to give evidence (e.g., Connolly & Read, 2006; Hanna, Davies, Henderson, Crothers, & Rotherham 2010; Klemfuss & Ceci, 2009; Lash, 1995). These long delays are likely to have a major effect on the quality of children's testimony in court.

In light of these issues, legislative changes in New Zealand over the last twenty years have put in place a number of special provisions in an attempt to improve the accuracy and quality of children's evidence. Amendments to the Evidence Act 1989 included a provision that allowed children alleging sexual abuse to provide their testimony by alternative means (Evidence Amendment Act 1989). These alternative means included the opportunity for 1) a child's pre-recorded forensic interviews to be played in court as his or her evidence-in-chief; 2) a child giving evidence in the courtroom to do so behind a screen so that the defendant was blocked from the child's line of sight; and 3) a child to give evidence in a room outside of the courtroom via closed circuit television (CCTV). The rules were different for children of different ages; children under the age of 12 could provide their evidence via pre-recorded videotape, while 12- to 17-year-olds could only use the CCTV option to provide their evidence. The Evidence Amendment Act 1989 also prohibited judges from warning the jury about the reliability of children's testimony (Bala, 1999; Pipe & Henaghan, 1996).

The exact protocol that was to be followed in these alternative interview methods was specified in the Evidence (Videotaping of Child Complainants) Regulations 1990. Children

were to be interviewed by specially trained interviewers from Child, Youth and Family (CYF), or the New Zealand Police (Ministry of Justice, 2014). The initial evidential interview was to be recorded on videotape, allowing the opportunity for the child to have his or her evidence at trial provided via this pre-recorded video instead of in person (Ministry of Justice, 2014). Recording the evidential interview and using it in court was intended to help protect a child's memory from delays imposed by the traditional court process and also to remove the child from the stressful process of the trial itself (Davies & Noon, 1991; Murray, 1995; Pipe & Henaghan, 1996).

Following the passing of the Evidence Amendment Act in 1989, Emma Davies and her colleagues conducted a series of studies in the 1990's examining how conditions had changed for child witnesses in New Zealand. They concluded that there was still much that could be done to aid children's participation in the legal system (Davies, Henderson, & Seymour, 1997; Davies & Seymour, 1997). In 1996, a Working Party on Child Witnesses was also established to conduct an extensive review on the effect of the new provisions in the Evidence Amendment Act 1989 on how children were treated in the New Zealand criminal courts. The Working Party made a number of recommendations for additional improvements including that access to alternative modes of giving evidence should be extended to all child witnesses (not just those alleging sexual abuse), and to children of all ages. In 2006, the Evidence Act 2006 was passed and included this provision.

It is important to note that children do not automatically have the right to give their evidence via alternative means. For cases involving child complainants, the prosecutor must apply to the court about the way in which the child will give evidence. In considering an application for a child complainant to give his or her evidence by alternative means, the Evidence Act 2006 specifies that the Judge must have regard for the need to ensure the fairness of the trial. However, Section 107(4) of the Act also specifies that there is a need to

minimise the stress on the complainant and to promote the recovery of the complainant from the alleged offence (Evidence Act 2006). It is not mandatory for the prosecutor to make an application for cases where a child is giving evidence as a witness (for example, providing evidence about witnessing a robbery), rather than as a complainant (giving evidence in a case where he or she is the victim).

Although most children in New Zealand now give their evidence-in-chief via a pre-recorded evidential interview which is subsequently played at the trial, provisions in the Evidence Act 2006 also allow children's cross-examination to be pre-recorded. In reality, however, this very rarely occurs. An Issues Paper released by the NZ Ministry of Justice in 2014 outlines the pros and cons of pre-recording all of a child's evidence (evidence-in-chief and cross-examination). The Crown Solicitor in Auckland is currently trialling this practice, but it is not yet commonplace across all district courts in New Zealand.

The intention of the special provisions for child witnesses introduced to the New Zealand judicial system was to maximise the likelihood that a child will provide the most complete, accurate, and reliable evidence. Have these special provisions had the desired effect? In some respects, the answer is yes. A number of studies have shown that the ability to provide their testimony by alternate means reduces children's stress of testifying compared to giving evidence directly in court (e.g., Cashmore, 1992; Davies, 1999; Davies & Noon, 1991; Davies et al., 1995; Goodman Batterman-Faunce, Orcutt, Thomas, Shapiro, & Sachsenmaier, 1998; Landstrom & Granhag, 2010; Murray, 1995; Nathanson & Saywitz, 2003; Saywitz & Nathanson, 1993). In an observational study of 93 trials, for example, Davies et al. (1995) showed that children's ratings of their stress levels were lower for children being interviewed on tape than for those who were examined directly by prosecution lawyers. The findings of laboratory-based studies provide similar evidence for the benefits of testifying via alternative means. Researchers have found that children who testified in court

had higher self ratings of anxiety compared to the children testifying via CCTV (Goodman et al., 1998) or in a different room (Nathanson & Saywitz, 2003; Saywitz & Nathanson, 1993).

In another study on the effects of alternative means on children's stress, Landstrom and Granhag (2010) had 10- to 11-year-old children act as witnesses. These child witnesses were asked to complete a questionnaire about their experiences during the interview. Children were asked to indicate on a 5-point scale how nervous or calm they were during the interview, and on a 6-point scale, whether the interview was easy or difficult. Overall, 41% of the children reported that they were nervous, and 35% reported that the interview was difficult. There was a significant difference between the video and live conditions on children's scores on the nervousness question; 56% of children in the live condition, 47% in the CCTV condition, and 19% in the video condition reported that they were nervous during the interview. Regardless of whether the children testified live, via CCTV, or on video, the most frequently reported explanation as to why the child was nervous was the presentation mode (59%). For example, children said they were nervous "because of all the people watching me while I was talking" (Landstrom & Granhag, 2010, p. 951). Finally, children in the live condition also reported the interview to be more difficult than did children in the CCTV and video conditions.

In cases of sexual abuse involving children, there is usually no physical evidence or corroborating witnesses so the child's testimony becomes the most crucial ingredient to the outcome of the trial (Conolly, Price, Lavoie, & Gordon, 2008; Pezdek et al., 2004). For this reason, it is important to understand how jurors perceive the value and credibility of children's evidence because the determination of credibility relies solely on juror perceptions of the child's testimony. With the changes to legislation allowing children to give evidence via pre-recorded video, what do we know about the effects of viewing children's evidence from video on jurors' perceptions of child witnesses?

Since the changes to the legislation, a number of studies have been conducted to ascertain the effect of video testimony on jurors' ratings of witness credibility. Several studies have found that mock jurors' credibility ratings of child witnesses are similar, irrespective of the mode by which the child's evidence was presented (e.g., Goodman, Taub, Jones, England, Port, Rudy, & Prado, 1992; Goodman et al., 1998; Landstrom & Granhag, 2010; Orcutt, Goodman, Tobey, Batterman-Faunce, & Thomas, 2001; Ross, Hopkins, Hanson, Lindsay, Hazen, & Eslinger, 1994; Swim, Borgida, & McCoy, 1993).

In one of the first studies in which researchers examined the effect of mode of presentation on the perception of child witnesses, Ross et al. (1994) compared 300 mock jurors' ratings of the guilt and credibility of a defendant, and the credibility of a child witness. Jurors watched a videotape of a simulated sexual abuse trial that included a 10-year-old witness accusing her father of sexual abuse. The witness testified either in court directly confronting the defendant, in court with a screen placed between the child and the defendant, or outside the courtroom via a video monitor. Ross et al. found that the mode used to provide the testimony did not have a significant impact on jurors' conviction rates and the perceived credibility of the defendant did not differ across the experimental conditions. Moreover, the mode in which the child testified had no impact on the perceived credibility of the child. Landstrom and Granhag (2010) also found no significant relation between the mode of presentation and jurors' perceptions of how convincing that child's testimony was. Similarly, Orcutt Goodman, Tobey, Batterman-Faunce, and Thomas (2001) found that there was no difference in empathy ratings for the child or the defendant when the evidence was provided in court or via CCTV.

Taken together, the research described thus far appears to indicate that videotaped testimony incurs no disadvantages relative to live testimony and may in fact incur several advantages (e.g., reduced delays and reduced stress). But other research has shown

differences in jurors' perceptions of the credibility of child witnesses between the two modes of presentation. For example, a series of studies by Gail Goodman and her colleagues have shown that mock jurors rate children who testify via video as less confident, less honest, and less accurate (e.g., Goodman et al., 1992, 1998; Goodman Myers, Qin, Quas, Castelli, Redlich, & Rogers, 2006; Tobey, Goodman, Batterman-Faunce, Orcutt, & Sachsenmaier, 1995; Landstrom, Granhag, & Hartwig, 2007). Goodman et al. (1992), for example, found that jurors perceived children who testified via videotape more negatively on a number of different dimensions: accuracy, honesty, believability, intelligence, confidence, and ability to differentiate between fact and fantasy compared to children who testified in open court. Similarly, Goodman et al. (1998) found that 5- to 6-year-old and 8- to 9-year-old child witnesses were seen to be less believable when they testified by video than when they testified live, despite the evidence given by video actually being more accurate. Landstrom et al. (2007) also found that observers rated children's live evidence as more convincing than the same testimony shown via video.

In Goodman et al.'s (2006) study, 12 5- to 7-year-old children participated in a play session where they were either touched or not touched by a confederate. The children in the touched condition were touched on their nose, neck, and bare stomach (target touches) by the confederate. Children were then interviewed; those who had been touched were asked to tell the truth, and those who had not been touched were told to claim that they had been. Each child then testified in the courtroom live or via video. Goodman et al. found that jurors rated children who testified in court as more credible and sympathised more with them than they did with children who testified on video.

Researchers have also shown that when children's testimony is provided on video, jurors are sometimes less likely to find the defendant guilty (Eaton, Ball, & O'Callaghan, 2001; Goodman et al., 2006; but see Davies et al., 1995; Hanna et al., 2010). For example,

Swim et al. (1993) asked mock jurors to watch a videotape of a simulated sexual abuse trial in which an 8-year-old child witness testified in open court or via a video monitor. Swim et al. found that for three out of the four counts that the defendant had been charged with, there was no difference in participants' conviction ratings as a function of condition. On the one count of criminal sexual assault in the first degree, however, participants in the open-court condition provided more guilty verdicts (48%) compared to participants in the video condition (30%).

In a similar study, Eaton et al. (2001) asked 108 mock jurors to watch a simulated video-recorded trial of an 11-year-old girl who was accusing her father of sexual abuse. Participants watched one of three versions in which the child witness testified either in the courtroom, by video deposition (giving evidence in a room outside the court), or by video link (giving evidence on a courtroom video screen). Mock jurors rated a number of components of the child witness' credibility (e.g., confidence), overall credibility, defendant credibility, and then gave their verdict. Eaton et al. found that the mock jurors rated the overall credibility of the child's testimony significantly lower if it was given via video link than when it was either given in court or by video deposition. In addition, the defendant was rated guilty less often by mock jurors in the video conditions than in the courtroom condition.

Given that the primary purpose of legislation enabling children to testify via alternative means was to reduce stress and anxiety so that they would be better able to provide complete and accurate testimony, why is it that jurors still tend to perceive witnesses giving evidence directly in the court room more favourably than witnesses giving evidence via videotape or CCTV? Research conducted by Davies et al. (1991) and Cashmore (1992) suggests that testimony via CCTV may result in a loss of emotional impact and immediacy. The loss of immediacy may distance jurors from the child and reduce the jurors' empathy for the child. Similarly, Eaton et al. (2001) suggests that child witnesses who give testimony via

video link are considered less credible by jurors because the jurors have trouble seeing the child's demeanour (e.g., subtle changes in emotion expression) compared to children who give evidence directly in court.

Differences in children's behaviour when testifying via alternate modes may also help to explain why videotaped or CCTV testimony is perceived more negatively compared to live testimony. For example, Orcutt et al. (2001) examined jurors' ability to distinguish deceptive from truthful testimony when children testified live or via CCTV. In their study, a male confederate interacted with a 7- to 9-year-old child and during the interaction, he and the child made a video together. There were three defendant-guilt conditions. In the guilty condition, children were filmed displaying bare parts of their upper arm, belly button, and toes. In the not-guilty condition, children were filmed displaying their sleeves, belt buckles, and shoes. Finally, in the deception condition, children were also filmed displaying their clothing, but at a later point in time, the children changed their testimony about what happened.

Three weeks after making the video, children testified in a mock trial. Mock jurors were told that the defendant had been charged with the crime of videotaping a child displaying bare body parts. Children in the guilty and not-guilty conditions were instructed to tell the truth about what happened, while children in the deception condition were asked to modify their testimony by saying that the defendant had filmed their bare body parts. Half of the children in each defendant-guilt condition testified live in open court; the other half testified via CCTV. Mock jurors were randomly assigned to a 12-person jury --- first they completed pre-deliberation questionnaires individually, then deliberated as a jury on a verdict, and finally, completed a post-deliberation questionnaire.

Orcutt et al found that during the pre-deliberation phase, jurors rated children testifying via CCTV as being less accurate, believable, consistent, and confident than

children who testified live. Despite this initial difference in how children who testified live or via CCTV were perceived, during the post-deliberation phase, Orcutt et al. found that jurors were no better at detecting deception when children testified in open court compared to testifying via CCTV.

In another study designed to explore the effects of CCTV on juror decision making, Landstrom and Granhag (2010) examined adults' perception and honesty assessments of truthful and deceptive child witnesses. A total of 108 10- to 11-year-old children acted as witnesses in the study and 240 adults (65 males, 175 females) participated as observers. Children participated in one of two events. Children in the real event condition were instructed to post a letter in a mailbox just outside their school. On their way, a male confederate initiated conversation with them about which toy they thought his dog would like. Children in the imagined event condition listened to an adult read a description that contained details of the event in the real event condition, and children were asked to imagine the described event. Three weeks later, children were interviewed about the real or imagined event either live, via two-way CCTV, or on video. Each observer was randomly assigned to watch an interview with either a truth-telling child (i.e., one who had participated in the real event) or a lying child (i.e., one who had participated in the imagined event). The observers then completed questionnaires about the perception of the child's statements, and the honesty of the child.

Landstrom and Granhag (2010) found that children in the live condition were perceived in more positive terms than were children in the CCTV condition, and the children in the CCTV condition were perceived in more positive terms than were children in the video condition. There was no difference in observers' accuracy between the presentation modes, nor between observers who watched children who were telling the truth and those children who were lying (see also Vrij, 2002). Landstrom and Granhag argued that in the live

condition, observers are temporally and socially closer to the child witnesses than they are for children in the CCTV and video conditions (vividness effect) which makes them view the child in more positive terms. That is, the closer the presentation mode is to the juror, the more positively he or she perceives the child witness.

Overall, research has shown that when jurors rate the credibility of a child, their accuracy is often poor, and this is particularly true when children are testifying via alternative methods (Goodman et al., 2002). The research suggests that mock jurors are poor at assessing the honesty of children's accurate, unintentionally false, or intentionally false eyewitness testimony (Leippe et al., 1992, 1993; Orcutt et al., 2001; Tobey et al., 1995). It is possible that jurors may be rating the child's credibility on a number of other factors including characteristics of the child such as his or her age, gender, language ability, perceived honesty, suggestibility, perceived intelligence, and demeanour while the child is testifying (Bottoms, Golding, Stevenson, Wiley, & Yozwiak, 2007; Kulisek, 2014), and characteristics of the allegations. Moreover, when observers only have access to a videotaped statement, it is even more difficult for them to assess a child's honesty (Talwar & Lee, 2002; Talwar, Lee, Bala, & Lindsay, 2006) and their judgments about a child's accuracy are often unrelated to the child's actual accuracy (Goodman, Batterman-Faunce, Schaaf, & Kenney, 2002; Leippe, Manion, & Romanczyk, 1992).

In summary, many countries make special provisions for child witnesses to provide testimony via pre-recording of their forensic interview. Although this practice makes children appear more relaxed and helps them to provide more complete and accurate accounts, research has shown that the effect of this practice on jurors' perceptions of children's credibility is mixed. Ironically, some studies have shown that mock jurors rate children who testify via video as less confident, less honest, and less accurate. Furthermore, when

children's testimony is provided on video, jurors are sometimes less likely to find the defendant guilty.

In addition to examining the effects of special provisions on child witnesses, it is also extremely important to consider what effect these provisions have on defendants' rights. Although no one would disagree that there is a need to minimise stress on child complainants and promote their recovery from any alleged offence(s), there must also be regard for a defendant's right to a fair trial. The use of videotaped testimony, for example, may have some other unintended consequences, particularly for those accused of a crime. For example, in New Zealand, in Section 23E of the Evidence Act (2006), the Judge can explicitly exclude sections of videotaped evidence. In other words, portions of the interview can be shown to the jury without showing the entire interview. The decision to edit the testimony are made based on two factors: 1) whether the probative value of the content is outweighed by its potential to be prejudicial; and 2) whether the content is relevant to the proceedings (Mahoney, McDonald, Optican, & Tinsley, 2010). Similar provisions for providing only portions of children's evidence also exist in other countries (e.g., England, Wales, Australia; McDonald & Tinsley, 2011).

In practice, what this means is that during a trial, portions of a child's pre-recorded evidential interview can be played to the jury without showing the entire videotaped interview; portions of the interview transcripts can be presented in the same way. Why should this matter? How could the elimination of some portions of the videotaped interview influence the ability of jurors to make a good decision regarding guilt or innocence?

Research over many decades has firmly established that the way in which an interviewer questions a child has a significant impact on the accuracy of the child's report (Ceci & Bruck, 1995; Bruck & Ceci, 1999; Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Zaragoza, Dahlgren, & Muench, 1992; Holliday & Hayes, 2001; Poole & Lindsay, 2001). There are typically two

types of questions asked when interviewing children; free-recall questions and direct questions. With free-recall questions (e.g., “Tell me what happened, “ or “Tell me everything that you can remember”), the child is allowed to express everything that he or she remembers about an event in their own words. Children’s answers to these kinds of free recall questions are usually highly accurate, but they are also often very brief and do not contain sufficient forensic detail. With direct questions, the child is asked about specific details of an event (e.g., “Was it dark outside?”). Compared to free recall questions, direct questions usually elicit more detailed answers, however, the increase in amount of information reported often comes at the expense of accuracy. One reason for this decrease in accuracy is that direct questions can often be misleading which increases the chance of errors. Misleading questions can include both leading questions (e.g., questions that contain details that the child has not already given, for example, “Who touched you?”) and suggestive questions (e.g., questions that make explicit suggestions to the child, for example, “He touched you, didn’t he?”) (Ceci & Bruck, 1995).

There is now ample experimental evidence that poor interviewing techniques are detrimental to the credibility of children’s testimony. One paradigm that researchers have used to study the effects of poor interviewing techniques is the misinformation paradigm. In this paradigm, children witness a target event and are later interviewed about things they saw (neutral questions) and things they did not see (suggestive questions). This paradigm can be used to assess the extent to which children take on board the information provided in the suggestive questions, later including that information in their own account of the event (e.g., Bruck & Ceci, 1999; Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Zaragoza, Dahlgren, & Muench, 1992).

In one study using this paradigm, Ackil and Zaragoza (1998) recruited participants of three different ages (first grade, third/fourth grade, and college age) and asked them to watch a clip from a movie. The children were then asked questions about events that never

happened in the video. A week later, a memory test was conducted. Ackil and Zaragoza found that participants of all age groups had developed false memories for previously fabricated details, reporting the details as though they had actually seen them in the movie. The finding that children will incorporate new details (commission errors) or altered details (change errors) into their memory reports following exposure to misleading information has been replicated in a large number of studies (e.g., Bruck & Ceci, 1999; Holliday & Hayes, 2001; Poole & Lindsay, 2001).

In a similar kind of study, Candel, Hayne, Strange, and Prevoo (2009) compared 7- to 11-year-old children's susceptibility to commission errors, omission errors, and change errors using a misinformation paradigm. They hypothesised that children would be more susceptible to information suggesting changes (change errors) than to information suggesting that new details were present (commission errors) or that old details were not (omission errors). Children watched a class presentation about China and were then individually interviewed about the presentation 3 days later. During the interview, children were asked a series of misleading questions which contained commission errors (e.g., 'A part of the presentation was about schools in China, wasn't it?'), omission errors (e.g., 'The presenter didn't tell how long the Great Wall of China is, did she?'), and change errors (e.g., 'Chinese people write with letters, don't they?'). One day after the interview, a new interviewer asked children for a free-recall account of the presentation ('tell me everything you can remember about the presentation and about the presenter'), followed by a series of non-directive prompts (e.g., 'what else did the presenter do?'). Next, children were given a recognition-memory test consisting of items that were correct (from the presentation) and items that were incorrect (these were items that were suggested during the suggestive interview). Three items referred to information that was contained in commission questions, three items referred to information that was contained in omission questions, and three items referred to information

that was contained in change questions. Children were instructed to say ‘correct’ to items containing correct information and ‘incorrect’ to items containing incorrect information.

Candel et al. found that older children were more likely to answer the questions correctly than were younger children. Overall, younger children were more susceptible to suggestive questions than were older children and children were more likely to yield to omission and change questions than they were to yield to commission questions. Younger children were more likely to make recognition memory errors than older children. Children yielded to change items (i.e., answered ‘correct’) more often than to commission items or omission items. The results of this study provide evidence that the way in which children, particularly young children, are interviewed is crucial. Children, especially younger children, seem to be very prone to suggestion and are easily influenced to take on and report misinformation.

In yet another study that was conducted to examine the influence of interviewers’ questioning on children’s accuracy, Poole and Lindsay (1995) examined 3- to 7-year-olds’ ability to recall details of an event in response to non-leading and misleading questions. These questions were asked after they had been provided with misinformation from their parents. In the Poole and Lindsay study, children participated in a staged event with “Mr Science,” a confederate who gave a number of science demonstrations. Each child was then interviewed after participating in the science demonstration with neutral open-ended questions. Three months after the science demonstration, the children’s parents read them a story about Mr Science on three consecutive days. The story described two events that the child had experienced and two events that the child had not experienced. After hearing the story, the children were re-interviewed about the science demonstration. Children were asked both misleading and non-leading questions about the event. Children were also asked about the source of their memories (e.g., “Did mum/dad read you a story about Mr Science’s pulley

machine?”). When they were initially interviewed using non-leading questions, children’s accounts of the science demonstration were highly accurate. Three months later, children who were asked leading questions after they received misinformation from their parents made a large number of mistakes. When asked misleading questions about events they had not actually experienced, 94% of children incorrectly agreed about events they only heard about in the story, but that they did not actually witness.

Even questions that simply require children to answer yes or no can be problematic. For example, Peterson and Biggs (1997) compared 2- to 13-year-old children’s “yes” and “no” responses when they were questioned about a stressful medical experience. In that study, children who had been hospitalised due to an injury that required medical attention were interviewed about their experience within a few days of the injury. During the interviews, children were asked free-recall questions, open-ended wh-questions (e.g., who, what, where, when), and some yes/no questions. Children’s reports were then compared to that from an adult witness to estimate the child’s accuracy. Most children were able to accurately answer wh-questions. Two- to 5-year-old children, however, were biased towards saying “no” when asked yes/no questions. When answering “no,” preschoolers’ accuracy rate was no greater than chance. The results from this study have implications for children’s testimony. This study provides support that the syntactic form of specific questions may have an influence on children’s responses. Other research has shown that some of the other dangers of questioning type on the accuracy of children’s responses are suggestion (e.g., Ceci & Bruck, 1993), and repetition of questions (e.g., Fivush & Schwarzmüller, 1995; Poole & White, 1991)

What about the long-term effect of poor interviewing techniques on children’s testimony? In one study designed to answer this question, Gross, Hayne, and Poole (2006) examined the long-term effect of misleading questioning on children’s subsequent reports. In

that study, 5- to 10-year-old children visited the police station where the children viewed the jail cells, had their fingerprints and photo taken, and were shown a police car. Children were interviewed in two misinformation interviews two and four weeks later. During the interviews, children were given both true and false information about what happened at the police station. For one group of children, the interviewer described two events that happened and two false events that never happened. For another group of children, the interviewer drew and described the same four events. The third group of children were asked to draw and describe the four events themselves. Six weeks after the event, children's memory for the trip to the police station was assessed during a final interview. In this interview, children were asked a free-recall question followed by a series of direct yes/no questions.

Gross et al. found that, regardless of interview condition, during the misinformation interviews, it was rare for children to reject the interviewer's suggestion that false events had occurred. Moreover, children who were given the opportunity to draw and describe the false events during the misinformation interview often gave detailed descriptions of these events, even though they did not happen. During the final interview, children spontaneously reported details about the false events, even during free recall. When children were asked specific questions, children in all three groups repeated information that had been discussed with them during the misinformation interviews, and they also provided additional details about events that never happened.

Taken together, the results of Gross et al.'s (2006) study again confirm that children are highly likely to accept suggested information when questioned in a misleading way. Their study also provided some of the first evidence that children may incorporate misleading information into their free-recall accounts of an event even when they are questioned appropriately in a subsequent interview. Gross et al. concluded that unless all interviews are free of misleading information, children may incorporate incorrect information into their

subsequent accounts of the same event (see also Ceci, Huffman, Smith, & Loftus, 1994).

Taken together, the results of all of the studies described above indicate that children can easily be misled to report false information about events they had seen or heard about.

Although misleading questions alone are enough to cause errors in children's reports, they are more detrimental when they are used in combination with other suggestive techniques. For example, Garvan et al. (1998) examined the combined effects of several interviewing techniques on children's accuracy. The interviewing techniques used in this study mimicked the interview techniques that were used by interviewers in the McMartin Preschool case. The McMartin preschool case is a highly publicized sexual abuse day care centre in America during the 1980's. This case involved a number of staff members being accused of child sexual abuse after an initial allegation was made by a child. Many of the children attending the centre were subsequently interviewed, where 360 of them disclosed forms of sexual abuse that had been conducted on them. The techniques that were used by the interviewers were poor. The techniques included highly suggestive and leading questions, and gave the children opportunity to pretend or speculate about potential events.

In Garvan et al.'s study, a male confederate, "Manny Morals" read a story to 56 3- to 6-year-old children. One week after listening to the story, half of the children were asked misleading questions and half of the children were asked misleading questions combined with additional interview techniques that were drawn from the McMartin Preschool case, including the interviewer praising the child, using positive reinforcement, and informing the child what other children had said about Manny. Children who were interviewed with a combination of techniques made over three times more false allegations against Manny than did children in the misleading questions only condition (58% vs. 17%). Garvan et al.'s findings demonstrate that reinforcement, social influence techniques, and improper interviewing techniques can have a strong and immediate effect on children's accuracy.

In another series of experiments, Waterman and colleagues examined the effect of ‘open’ versus ‘closed’ questions on children’s responses to nonsensical questions and unanswerable questions (Waterman, Blades, & Spencer, 2000, 2001, 2004). For example, Waterman et al. (2000) asked 5- to 8-year-olds a series of open-ended questions and closed yes/no questions, some of which were considered sensible (e.g. “What colour is a banana) and some of which did not make sense (e.g., “Will rectangles shout at lazy kettles?”). When children were asked sensible questions, both open and yes/no questions were answered equally well. When asked nonsensical questions, children rarely answered them if they were open, but 72% of children attempted to answer nonsensical yes/no questions. The overall results from their 2000, 2001, and 2004 studies showed that children over the age of 5 answered the yes/no questions appropriately when they were asked the sensible questions and the questions that were considered answerable based on the information given. However, when children were asked questions that did not make sense or that they could not possibly answer, they often incorrectly said “yes” in response to closed questions instead of saying that they did not know the answer. These studies provide further evidence that the type of questions that are asked to children and the context in which they are asked in have an influence on the accuracy of the child’s reports.

Research on the relation between interviewers’ questions and children’s accuracy is relevant to the issue of video-recorded testimony in a number of different ways. For example, the Court recognises the importance of asking appropriate questions and in the courtroom, lawyers are not allowed to ask leading questions (Section 89, Evidence Act 2006); objections to leading questions asked in open Court can be made by the opposing counsel. In contrast, when children’s evidence is collected outside the courtroom (i.e., pre-recorded), the opposing counsel is not present and cannot prevent the interviewer from asking leading questions. In addition, the current legislation allows Judges to explicitly exclude

sections of videotaped evidence, increasing the chances that jurors will not see a child's full testimony. In this way, juries might be shielded from sections of the interview that contain inappropriate questioning.

Excluding portions of a child's testimony also raises another important issue. When only portions of the child's evidential interview is presented to the jury, it prevents members of the jury from seeing portions of the interview in their original context. During an evidential interview, children's accounts are not necessarily limited to reporting information specific to their core allegations; children may also report other information. Sometimes that additional information comprises tangential or unrelated information, but sometimes it also includes additional allegations that contain bizarre or implausible claims about what happened. For example, Dalenberg (1996) examined 644 interviews of 3- to 17-year-old sexual abuse complainants. She found that approximately 2% of the interviews contained bizarre or improbable claims. In one interview, for example, when a 3.5-year-old child reporting genital contact by a preschool teacher was asked, "Where were you?", she responded, "In bed with mommy." In another interview, a child claimed that she saw the alleged perpetrator torture and kill other children.

The discussion of details that are of a bizarre or implausible nature could affect jurors' perceptions of a child's credibility. Bizarre and implausible claims are highly common in mass allegations of sexual abuse, including those involving daycare centres (Bruck & Ceci, 1995; Linder, 2003; Peace, Brower, & Rocchio, 2014; Rosenthal, 1995; Schreiber et al., 2006). For example, in the McMartin child care case, children claimed that they had watched a baby being beheaded and were made to drink the blood. They also reported that they watched or participated in consuming excretions or semen, that they were taken into secret rooms, or that they watched animal sacrifices (Linder, 2003). Similar, bizarre allegations were also made against Kelly Michaels in the Wee Care Nursery School case. In that case,

children made claims that Kelly raped and assaulted them with knives/swords, spoons and lego blocks, that she licked peanut butter off their genitals, made them drink her urine and eat her feces, amputated their genitals, and made them lick each other like cats (Bruck & Ceci, 1995; Rosenthal, 1995; Schreiber & Parker, 2004). Even though these types of details may not necessarily refer to the core charges in a trial, jurors would presumably consider this information when making a decision about a child's credibility and believability. The effect of these types of details or the removal of these details on juror decision making is largely unknown.

Although we know little or nothing about the effects of implausible or bizarre details on jurors' evaluations of children's testimony, there has been some, limited research on how these types of details influence jurors' perception of adults' testimony. For example, a study by Peace, Brower, and Rocchio (2014), mock jurors read an adult's eyewitness statement about a mugging. The statement contained 5, 10, or 15 bizarre details; these details were mildly bizarre (e.g., the perpetrator wore dark red gloves), moderately bizarre (e.g., the perpetrator wore white gloves), or extremely bizarre (e.g., the perpetrator wore a baseball glove). Jurors then evaluated the credibility of the witness's testimony by completing a perceived credibility questionnaire that contained questions relating to level of bizarreness, plausibility, belief in events as reported, witness credibility, and the bizarreness of specific details. As the bizarreness level increased, the perceived level of credibility of the witness decreased. Similarly, the more bizarre details the testimony contained, the less credible, believable, and plausible the witness and the evidence were perceived to be.

The results from Peace et al.'s (2014) study suggest that, while the level of bizarreness plays a role in judgements about witness credibility, the number of bizarre or implausible details may be a more important determinant of truthfulness for jurors. In particular, an abundance of bizarre details leads individuals to doubt the story overall, rather

than strange details supporting one another. If few details are strange, acceptance of the witness as credible remains high (see also Vrij, 2008). This study supports the idea that people reject overly bizarre information as truthful (Peace et al., 2014).

Do similar factors affect jurors' evaluation of children's evidence? What we do know to date is that when a child's testimony is presented with the inclusion of the rapport building stage and questions pertaining to the child's understanding of truth and lies, mock jurors evaluate the testimony differently compared to testimony that excludes these stages. In a study by Krahenbuhl (2012), mock jurors rated the child witness to be more credible and honest, and are more likely to believe the child's allegation when the interview transcript contains the rapport building stage and the understanding between truth and lies.

What we still do not know is how a child witnesses' additional allegations, particularly those containing bizarre or implausible details influence jurors' perceptions of the child's credibility. We also do not know how jurors assess a child's credibility when only portions of the interview are shown, or how jurors rate the guilt or innocence of the defendant under these conditions. For example, does showing only portions of an interview lead to more convictions or more exonerations? Similarly, is a child considered to be more believable when the bizarre claims are removed from the transcript, or vice versa?

To the best of our knowledge, there is no research examining how jurors interpret segments of a child's testimony in the absence of the context of the full interview, particularly when the child's core allegations are presented against a backdrop of bizarre or implausible claims. Given this, the aim of the current study is to examine how mock jurors rate the believability of a child's eyewitness testimony when that testimony is presented either in full, or has been truncated in a way that is currently allowable in New Zealand courts, as well as many courts around the world. Specifically, we examined the effect of presenting only portions of a child's transcribed testimony on jurors' perception of the child's

credibility as well as their impression of the defendant's guilt or innocence. To do this, we asked mock jurors to evaluate a transcript that either contained a central core allegation only, or transcripts that included the core allegation in conjunction with one or more additional allegations that were less plausible. We hypothesised that jurors who read the transcripts that included less plausible allegations would have a more negative perception of the child's credibility.

Experiment 1A

Method

Participants

In New Zealand, anyone who is on the electoral roll and under the age of 65 is eligible for jury service. Given this requirement, we recruited participants aged 18 years and older to participate in this study. The final sample size was 64 (49 females; M age = 19.73 years; SD = 2.32). An additional two participants were excluded because they failed to demonstrate that they had thoroughly read, comprehended, and retained the information that was contained in their assigned transcript (see below). Participants were recruited from the Department of Psychology Year 1 and Year 2 Experimental Participation Pool, or via word of mouth. Pool participants satisfied a small portion of course credit by completing a worksheet based on the experiment; remaining participants were reimbursed with a movie voucher for their costs of participating. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants.

Procedure

Participants were tested individually in the laboratory. They were told that they would be asked to read a transcript of an evidential interview with a child, putting themselves in the role of a juror, and that they would then answer some questions from the experimenter before completing two computer-based questionnaires.

Each participant then read the same background information about the case:

Warren Smith is a 55-year-old cleaner [janitor] at a local primary school. Warren has a mild intellectual impairment. He works most days as part of a community-based employment scheme. He has worked in this particular school for almost a year and there have been no prior complaints about his behaviour. He is charged with assault on a child. The allegation was made by a 6-year-old, female child. The child initially disclosed the alleged assault to her mother and was subsequently interviewed by a specialist interviewer for the police.

Next, participants read a transcript of a mock evidential interview that was conducted with a child complainant, Jasmine. Based on a corpus of transcripts from real evidential interviews with child complainants of abuse, we constructed four different interview transcripts for this experiment. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four transcript conditions ($n = 16$ per condition). Each transcript began with a series of questions designed to establish that the child witness understood the difference between truth and lies, knew what making a promise meant, and promised to tell the truth. This section of the transcript was 926 words in length.

Each transcript then included questions from the interviewer and responses from the child witness about the same core allegation—Jasmine alleged that Warren hit her on the leg in the school bathroom and that, as a result, her leg went purple. Following the core allegation, the transcripts differed according to the number and nature of additional allegations.

1. For participants in the *Core Only* condition, the transcript concluded at the end of the core allegation (see Appendix 2A).
2. For participants in the *Core + 1* condition, the core allegation was followed by the additional allegation that Warren locked Jasmine in a cupboard at school along with two of her friends (see Appendices 2A and 2B).
3. For participants in the *Core + 2* condition, the core allegation was followed by the additional allegation that Warren drove Jasmine from school to a cave where some of his friends were dressed as wizards. While at the cave, they hit her with swords and sticks and took photos (see Appendices 2A and 2C).
4. For participants in the *Core + 1 and 2* condition, all three of the allegations were presented in the transcript in this order (see Appendices 2A, 2B, and 2C).

To ensure that the questioning style used to elicit each of the three allegations was

equivalent, we balanced the number of open-ended, specific-open, and multiple-choice questions used to elicit each allegation. We also balanced the number of off-topic responses given by the child, and the number of minimal responses (e.g., *umm* or *uh-huh*), pauses, and instructions to speak up given by the interviewer. The allegations were also similar in length (Core Allegation: 545 words; Additional Allegation 1: 485 words; Additional Allegation 2: 539 words).

When the participant had finished reading the transcript, the experimenter began the one on one verbal interview phase. During this phase, participants were asked several questions about what they had read and made several judgements about the case. First, participants were asked three questions to ensure that they had thoroughly read, comprehended, and retained the information contained in their assigned transcript (i.e., “*How old is Jasmine?*”, “*How many times was Jasmine allegedly assaulted?*”, and “*Whom did Jasmine first tell about the assault by Warren?*”). If they could not answer all of these questions correctly, they were excluded from the final sample.

Next, participants were asked to render a verdict on each of the allegations in their assigned transcript. All participants were asked, *Did Warren hit the child?* Participants in the *Core + 1* condition were also asked, *Did Warren lock the child in a cupboard?* Participants in the *Core + 2* condition were also asked, *Did Warren take the child somewhere in a car?* Participants in the *Core + 1 and 2* condition were asked all three questions. After providing their verdict, participants rated how strongly they believed Jasmine’s allegation of physical assault on a 7-point scale (1 = *Not at all*; 4 = *Neutral*; 7 = *Very strongly*). Finally, participants rated the overall likelihood that Warren committed the assault (1 = *Extremely unlikely*; 4 = *Neutral*; 7 = *Extremely likely*), and gave an overall confidence rating regarding Warren’s guilt (1 = *Extremely confident that Warren is innocent*; 4 = *Neutral*; 7 = *Extremely confident that Warren is guilty*).

Following the verbal interview, participants were seated at a computer and completed two final questionnaires. First, they were presented with a series of questions specific to the case. The questions were based on those used by Kulisek (2014) and were presented using MediaLab (Jarvis, 2012). First, using a 7-point scale (1 = *very unlikely*; 4 = *neutral*; 7 = *very likely*), participants answered a series of 18 questions regarding their views on the circumstances surrounding Jasmine's allegation(s) (see Appendix 1). Next, participants used another 7-point scale (1 = *low*; 4 = *moderate*; 7 = *high*) to rate Jasmine on 11 characteristics: memory ability, language ability, innocence, ability to distinguish imagination from reality, emotional maturity, knowledge of right and wrong, obedience, honesty, confidence, likeability, and intelligence.

Based on a reliability analysis conducted by Kulisek (2014), we used each participant's responses to selected questions to calculate two scores reflecting participant's perception of Jasmine's credibility: an *honesty* score (combined mean of ratings for questions 1, 15, 16, 18, and the rating of honesty) and a *cognitive competence* score (combined mean of ratings for questions 5-9, 11, and ratings of memory ability, language ability, ability to distinguish imagination from reality, knowledge of right and wrong, and intelligence).

Finally, participants used a 7-point scale (1 = *none*; 4 = *a moderate amount*; 7 = *a great deal*) to rate how much contact they had with children, their personal experience with child physical abuse, as well as their knowledge about eyewitness memory/testimony. After completing the questionnaires, participants were thanked for their time and debriefed.

Results

Table 1 shows participants' responses to the questions about their experience with children, child physical abuse, and eyewitness testimony. There were no significant differences between the transcript conditions in terms of participants' experience or amount of contact they had with children, or how much knowledge they had about eyewitness testimony. A Fisher's Exact Test (FET) with the Freeman-Halton extension¹ indicated that the number of participants who indicated that they had personal experience with child physical abuse did not differ across the four transcript conditions ($P = .188$, FET).

Table 1.
Participants' experience with children, child physical abuse, and eyewitness testimony in each condition (means and standard deviations where appropriate or number of participants).

| | Core Only | Core + 1 | Core + 2 | Core + 1 & 2 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| As an adult, how much contact have you had with children?* | 5.00 (.45) | 5.06 (.34) | 5.13 (.41) | 4.88 (.38) |
| Do you have personal experience with child physical abuse? | 6 out of 16 | 5 out of 16 | 4 out of 16 | 1 out of 16 |
| If yes, rate your personal experience* | 3.83 (.48) | 3.40 (.40) | 5.00 (.71) | 1.00 (0) |
| Rating of knowledge about eyewitness testimony* | 4.00 (.26) | 2.94 (.31) | 3.56 (.33) | 3.50 (.32) |

* 1 = none, 4 = a moderate amount, 7 = A great deal

Figure 1 shows the number of participants who rendered a guilty verdict to the allegations that were contained in their assigned transcript. Across all four conditions, the

¹ The Freeman-Halton extension of Fisher's exact test is used to analyse a 4 x 2 contingency table when 20% of the expected cell frequencies are < 5 (Freeman & Halton, 1951).

majority of the participants believed that Warren was guilty of the core allegation—hitting Jasmine on the leg. In addition, participants were more likely to render a guilty verdict to the core allegation than they were to render guilty verdicts to either of the additional allegations, confirming that participants considered these additional allegations as less plausible.

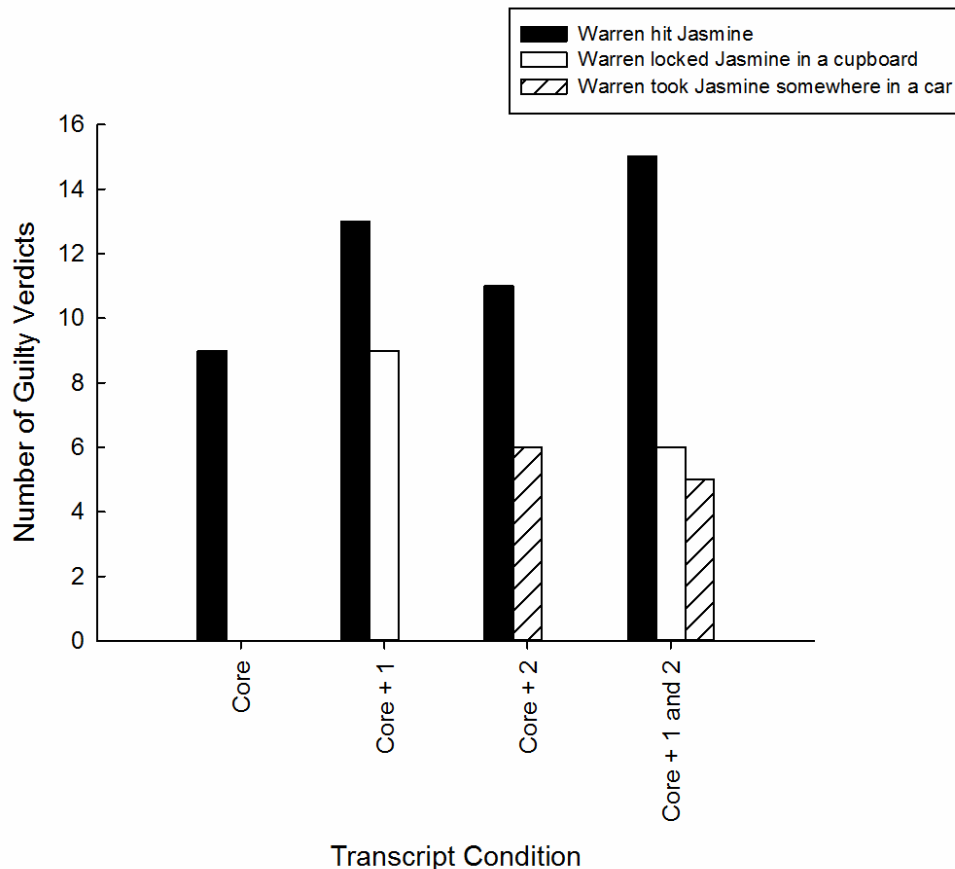


Figure 1. The number of guilty verdicts rendered to each allegation as a function of transcript condition in Experiment 1a. ($n = 16$ in each condition).

Recall that the primary research question was whether the inclusion of additional, less plausible allegations influenced mock jurors’ evaluation of the core allegation. To answer this question, we used Fisher’s Exact Test (FET) with the Freeman-Halton extension to compare the number of participants who rendered a guilty verdict to the question about the core allegation, *Did Warren hit Jasmine?* Although this analysis did not reach conventional levels of significance ($P = .063$, FET), given that the pattern of participants’ responses was in

the opposite direction to what we had expected (see Figure 1), we investigated the differences between the transcript conditions further. Contrary to our hypothesis, participants in the *Core + 1 and 2* condition were *more* likely to render a guilty verdict to the core allegation ($n = 15$) than were participants in the *Core only* condition ($n = 9$; $P = .037$, FET). That is, the presence of two additional allegations—both of which contained details that were less plausible than those in the core allegation—increased the likelihood that participants rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. The number of guilty verdicts rendered by participants in the *Core + 1* and the *Core + 2* conditions were intermediate between these two extremes ($n_s = 13$ and 11 , respectively) and were not statistically different from either (P_s ranged from $.252$ to $.716$, FET).

Next, we took a closer look at the pattern of responses for participants whose assigned transcripts had contained additional, less plausible allegations. We asked the following question: if participants rendered a not guilty verdict to the additional allegations, how did they judge the core allegation? We found that 7 out of 16 participants in the *Core + 1* condition rendered a not guilty verdict to the allegation that Warren had locked Jasmine in the cupboard; of those 7 participants, 71% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. Similarly, for participants in the *Core + 2* condition, 10 out of 16 rendered a not guilty verdict to the allegation that Warren had taken Jasmine somewhere in the car; of those 10 participants, 60% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation.

Perhaps the most compelling data come from those participants whose assigned transcript contained the core allegation as well as both additional allegations. Ten out of 16 participants in the *Core + 1 and 2* condition rendered a not guilty verdict when asked if Warren had locked Jasmine in the cupboard, and of those 10 participants, 90% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. In response to the allegation that Warren had taken Jasmine somewhere in the car, 11 out of 16 participants rendered a not guilty verdict; of those

11 participants, 91% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. Finally, 9 out of 16 participants rendered a not guilty verdict to both of the additional allegations, but of those 9 participants, 89% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. In summary, across all conditions, participants were highly likely to render a guilty verdict for the core allegation, even when they rejected the additional allegations that were part of the same transcript of the same child's testimony.

In the final part of our analysis, we calculated a series of 4 (Transcript Condition) x 2 (Core Allegation Verdict: Guilty, Not Guilty) analyses of variance (ANOVAs) to examine the effect of these two variables on participants' judgments of the child's believability, honesty, and cognitive competence; the likelihood of the defendant's guilt; and confidence in verdict. Regardless of the number or nature of the allegations contained in the transcripts, participants' ratings on the questions assessing the child's believability, honesty, and cognitive competence, the likelihood of the defendant's guilt, or participants' confidence in their verdict were similar. That is, there was no significant main effect of transcript condition on any of these variables (see Figure 2; largest $F(3, 56) = 0.853, p = .471, \eta_p^2 = .044$).

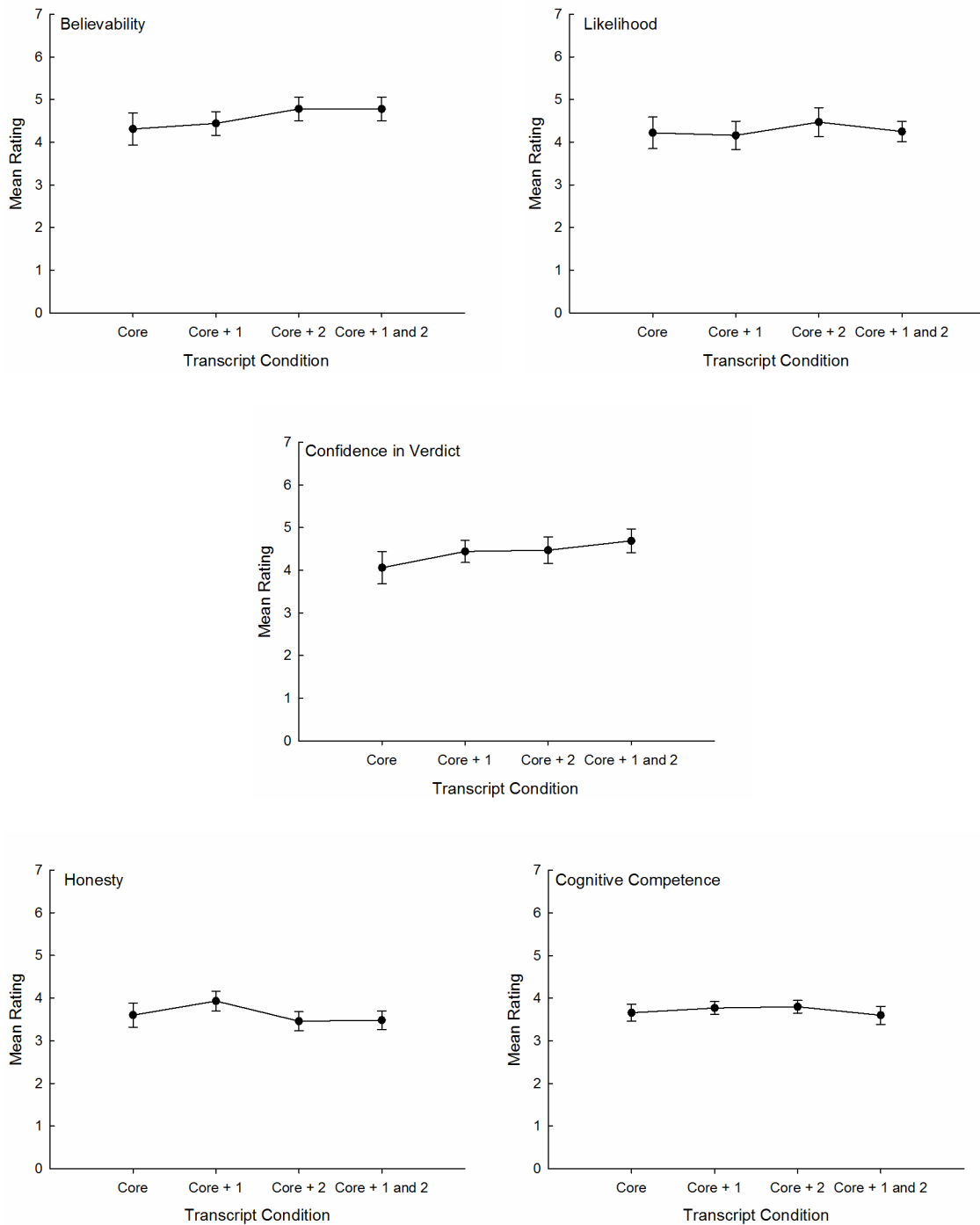


Figure 2. Participants’ mean ratings on the questions assessing the child’s believability, honesty, and cognitive competence, the likelihood of the defendant’s guilt, or participants’ confidence in their verdict, as a function of transcript condition.

Figure 3 shows participants' ratings on the questions as a function of core allegation verdict. Not unexpectedly, relative to participants who rendered a not guilty verdict to the core allegation, participants who rendered a guilty verdict believed Jasmine's allegation more strongly ($F(1, 56) = 75.31, p < .01, h_p^2 = .574$), thought that it was more likely that Warren was guilty of the allegation ($F(1, 56) = 11.84, p = .001, h_p^2 = .174$), were more confident that Warren was guilty ($F(1, 56) = 41.80, p < .01, h_p^2 = .427$), and rated Jasmine as more honest ($F(1, 56) = 20.57, p < .01, h_p^2 = .27$). In contrast, participants' ratings of Jasmine's cognitive competence did not differ as a function of core allegation verdict ($F(1, 56) = 1.34, p = .252, h_p^2 = .023$). There was no Transcript \times Core Allegation Verdict interaction for any of the dependent variables (largest $F(3, 56) = .943, p = .426, h_p^2 = .048$).

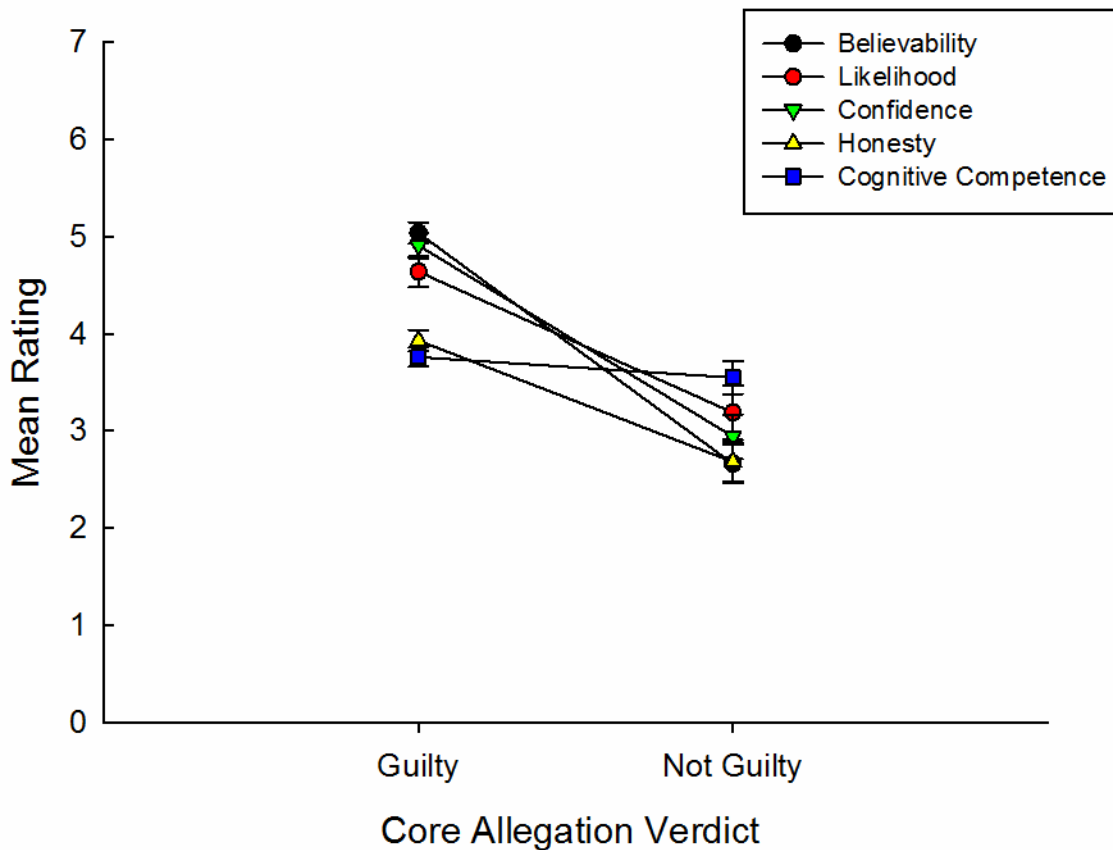


Figure 3. Participants' mean ratings on the questions assessing the child's believability, honesty, and cognitive competence, the likelihood of the defendant's guilt, or participants' confidence in their verdict, as a function of core allegation verdict.

In summary, we found that participants in all four transcript conditions indicated that they believed Jasmine's core allegation against Warren. It appears that even when a child's core allegations are presented against a backdrop of more implausible allegations, mock jurors still believe that something must have happened. In the present experiment, however, the *core allegation* was always presented to the participants first. Given this, it is possible that the order in which the allegations were presented to participants may have influenced the verdict that they rendered to the core allegation. In Experiment 1B, we presented participants

with a transcript that contained information about the additional allegations before the information about the core allegation.

Experiment 1B

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited in the same way as in Experiment 1A. The final sample comprised 16 participants (9 females; M age = 18.5 years, SD = 0.89). An additional 3 participants were excluded because they failed to demonstrate that they had thoroughly read, comprehended, and retained the information contained in their assigned transcript.

Procedure

The procedure was identical to Experiment 1A with the exception that we created a new transcript where the order of allegations was reversed so that for participants in the *1 and 2 + Core* condition, the transcript started with the information about the two additional allegations followed by the core allegation.

Results

Participants in Experiment 1B did not differ from participants in Experiment 1A in terms of their experience with children ($M = 5.19$, $SD = .48$) and knowledge of eyewitness testimony ($M = 3.44$, $SD = .34$). One participant indicated that she had a moderate amount (rating of 5.00) of personal experience with child physical abuse.

Figure 4 shows the number of guilty verdicts rendered to the allegations that were contained in the transcript. The data from Experiment 1A are also shown for comparison. As shown in Figure 4, participants in Experiment 1B—who read about the additional allegations before reading about the core allegation—were the least likely of all of the participants across both experiments to believe that Warren was guilty of the core allegation—hitting Jasmine on the leg. In addition, participants in the *1 and 2 + Core* condition were as likely to render a guilty verdict to the core allegation as they were to render guilty verdicts to either of the additional allegations (albeit relatively rarely).

As in Experiment 1A, we used Fisher's Exact Test (FET) with the Freeman-Halton extension to analyse whether the number of guilty verdicts rendered to the core allegation differed according to the order in which additional allegations, if any, were contained in participants' assigned transcript. We conducted a cross-experiment comparison by using the data from the 4 transcript conditions in Experiment 1A in the analysis. As shown in Figure 4, there was a significant difference in the number of participants who rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation as a function of transcript condition ($P = .019$, FET). Participants in the *1 and 2 + Core* condition were less likely to render a guilty verdict to the core allegation ($n = 7$) than were participants in the *Core + 1 and 2* condition ($n = 15$; $P = .0059$, FET). That is, the order of presentation of the two additional allegations had a major influence on the likelihood that participants rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation.

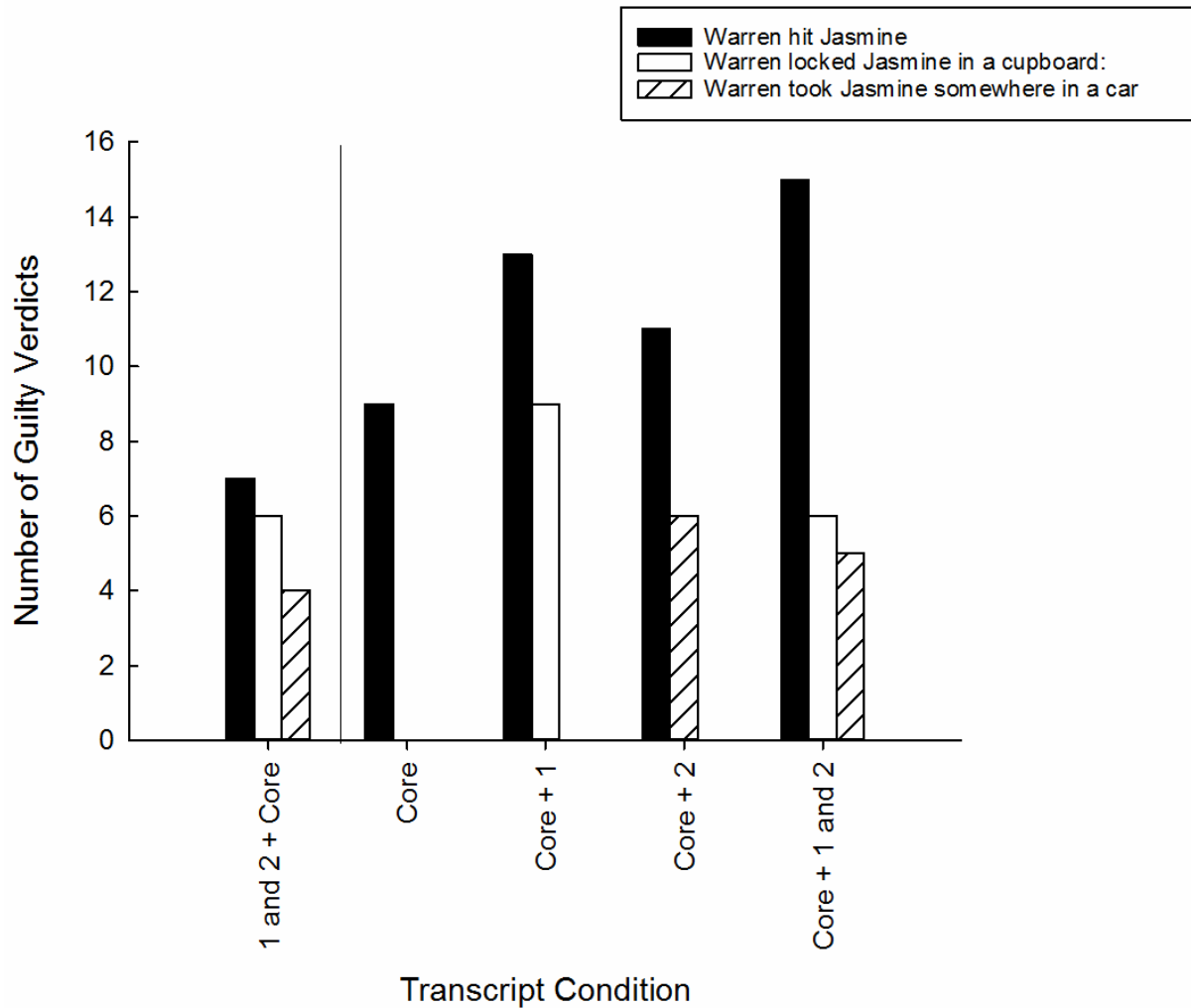


Figure 4. The number of guilty verdicts rendered to each allegation in the transcript used in Experiment 1B. The data from Experiment 1A are shown for comparison purposes. ($n = 16$ in each condition).

Analysis of participants' judgments of the child's believability, honesty, and cognitive competence; the likelihood of the defendant's guilt; and confidence in verdict revealed a similar pattern of results to that described in Experiment 1A. That is, reversing the order of the allegations in Experiment 1b had no effect on any of the participants' ratings (Believability: $M = 3.69$, $SE = .28$; Honesty: $M = 3.03$, $SE = .18$; Cognitive Competence: $M = 3.41$, $SE = .13$; Likelihood: $M = 3.66$, $SE = .29$; or Confidence: $M = 3.84$, $SE = .34$; cf. Figure 2).

As in Experiment 1A, we took a closer look at the pattern of responses for participants whose transcript contained the additional, less plausible allegations first. We asked the same question: if participants rendered a not guilty verdict for the additional allegations, how did they judge the core allegation? We found that 10 out of 16 participants rendered a not guilty verdict to the allegation that Warren had locked Jasmine in the cupboard; of those 10 participants, 40% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. In addition, 12 out of 16 participants rendered a not guilty verdict to the allegation that Warren had taken Jasmine somewhere in the car; and of those 12 participants, 33% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. For the 8 out of 16 participants who rendered a not guilty verdict to both of the additional allegations; 25% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation.

In summary, we found that participants were much less likely to believe the core allegation when it appeared at the end of the transcript, after participants had read the additional allegations. It appears that the order of the presentation of the allegations may affect mock decision-making regarding the core allegation.

Experiment 2

In Experiment 1A, regardless of whether participants had received information about a core allegation only or about additional allegations that contained less plausible details, the majority of participants indicated that Warren was guilty of the core allegation. In fact, in stark contrast to our original hypothesis, the greatest number of guilty verdicts to the core allegation were rendered by participants who received a transcript containing the highest number of less plausible details. That is, when a child's core allegations were presented against a backdrop of less plausible allegations, mock jurors still appeared to believe that something must have happened. We wondered, however, whether it was possible that the order in which the allegations were presented to participants may have influenced the verdict that they rendered to the core allegation. To test this possibility, in Experiment 1B, we reversed the order of the allegations so that the core allegation was presented last. We found that order did make a difference; participants rendered significantly fewer guilty verdicts to the core allegation when it was presented last in the transcript. Thus in Experiment 1, mock jurors evaluated the veracity of the core allegation differently if it came after the additional, less plausible allegations.

In Experiment 2, we assessed the generality of the findings of Experiments 1A and 1B by creating three new transcripts that contained additional allegations that varied with respect to plausibility. In contrast to Experiment 1, these new allegations involved allegations of sexual abuse.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited in the same way as in Experiment 1. The final sample comprised 80 participants (49 females; M age = 19.94 years, SD = 2.76). An additional 14 participants were excluded because they failed to demonstrate that they had thoroughly read, comprehended, and retained the information contained in their assigned transcript. Although all of these participants correctly answered the first 2 questions (i.e., “*How old is Jasmine?*” and “*How many times was Jasmine allegedly assaulted?*”), they all failed to answer the final question, “*Whom did Jasmine first tell about the assault by Warren?*” Because these participants still completed all phases of the experiment, we checked to see if their data were different from the data of participants in the final sample; however, we found no differences between included and excluded participants on any measure.

Procedure

To provide a point of comparison, we retained the original core allegation from Experiment 1. We then constructed two new additional allegations that were taken directly from real evidential interviews with child complainants of abuse. With the exception of identifying information, these allegations were presented exactly as they had appeared in the transcripts of the original evidential interviews.

1. For participants in the *Core Only* condition, the transcript concluded at the end of the core allegation (see Appendix 2A).
2. For participants in the *Core + I* condition, the core allegation was followed by an additional allegation that Warren made Jasmine get in the bath with him, telling her that he would make her do it by getting her undressed. Jasmine also alleged that, while they were in the bath, Warren forced her to eat her “poos” (see Appendices 2A and 3A).

3. For participants in the *Core + 2* condition, the core allegation was followed by an additional allegation that Warren took Jasmine to another location. During the interview, Jasmine changes her story from saying that Warren took her to a library building to saying that Warren took her to his mother's house or to his grandmother's house, and that Warren's friend's mother and grandmother were present. Jasmine also alleged that Warren locked her in a trapdoor and stuck burning paper and a stick up her bottom, and that 20 of his friends were there (see Appendices 2A and 3B).
4. For participants in the *Core + 1 and 2* condition, all three of the allegations were presented in the transcript in this order (see Appendices 2A, 3A, and 3B).
5. For participants in the *1 and 2 + Core* condition, the three allegations were presented in the reverse order (as in Experiment 1B).

The procedure for Experiment 2 was identical to that of Experiment 1. Participants were asked to render a verdict on each of the allegations in their assigned transcript. Immediately after rendering each verdict, they were asked to describe why they had made that decision and to rate their confidence in that verdict on the same 7-point scale used in Experiment 1.

Results

Table 2 shows participants' responses to the questions about their experience with children, child physical abuse, and eyewitness testimony. As in Experiment 1, there were no significant differences on these demographic questions as a function of transcript condition.

Table 2. Participants' experience with children, child physical abuse, and eyewitness testimony in each condition (means and standard deviations where appropriate or number of participants).

| | Core Only | Core + 1 | Core + 2 | Core + 1 & 2 | 1 & 2 + Core |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| As an adult, how much contact have you had with children?* | 5.25 (.39) | 5.62 (.35) | 4.87 (.45) | 4.31 (.51) | 4.63 (.34) |
| Do you have personal experience with child physical abuse? | 1 out of 16 | 6 out of 16 | 3 out of 16 | 2 out of 16 | 3 out of 16 |
| If yes, rate your personal experience* | 3.00 (0) | 5.00 (.81) | 3.33 (.88) | 7.00 (0) | 4.67 (1.20) |
| Rating of knowledge about eyewitness testimony* | 4.31 (.30) | 4.13 (.38) | 3.19 (.38) | 3.44 (.29) | 3.56 (.30) |

* 1 = none, 4 = a moderate amount, 7 = A great deal

Figure 5 shows the number of participants who rendered a guilty verdict to the allegations that were contained in their assigned transcript. As in Experiment 1, irrespective of transcript condition, the majority of the participants rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. In addition, participants were much more likely to render a guilty verdict to the core allegation than they were to render guilty verdicts to either of the additional allegations, again confirming that these allegations were viewed as less plausible.

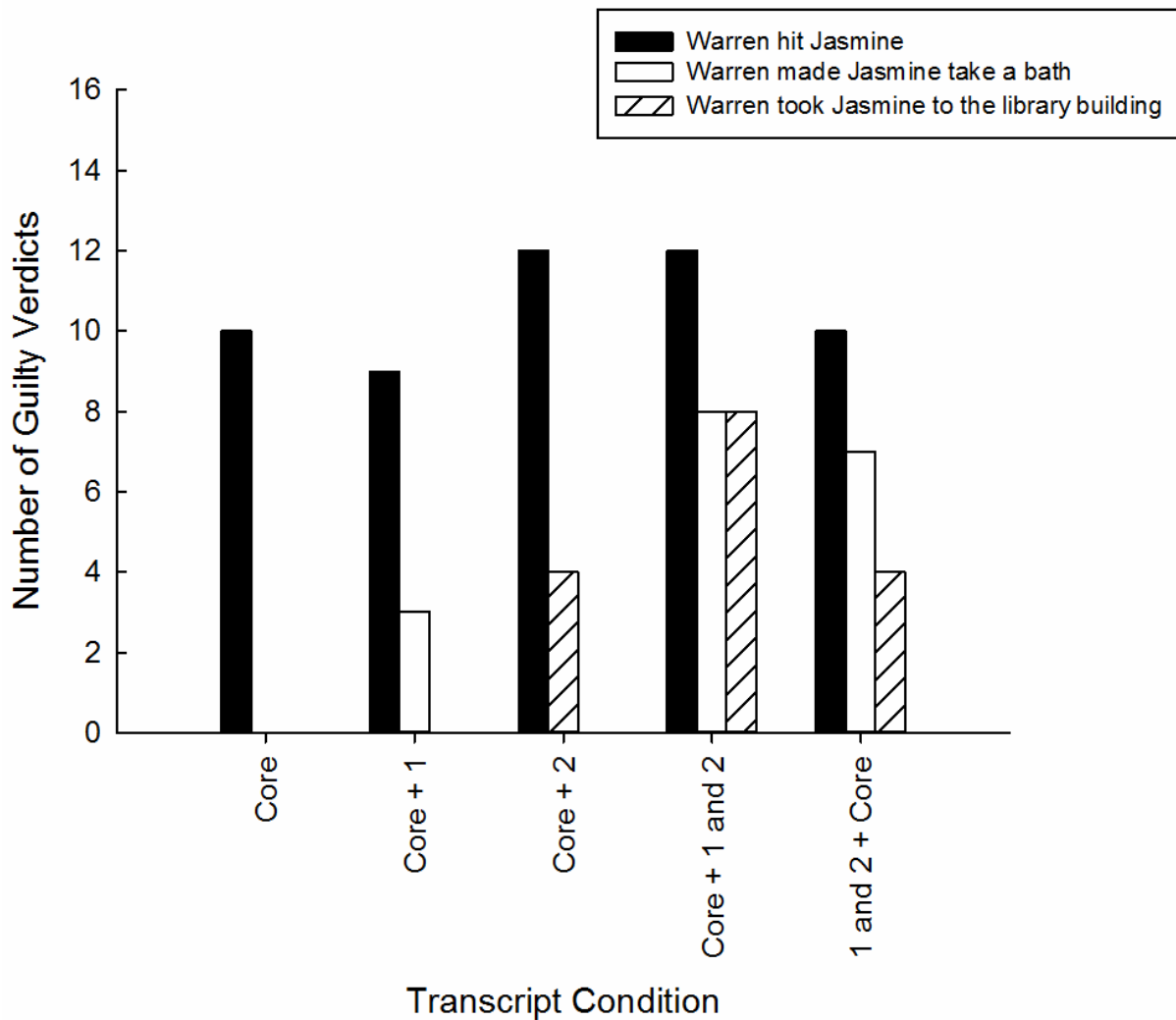


Figure 5. The number of guilty verdicts rendered to each allegation as a function of transcript condition in Experiment 2. ($n = 16$ in each condition).

As in Experiment 1, we used Fisher’s Exact Test (FET) with the Freeman-Halton extension to analyze whether the number of guilty verdicts rendered to the core allegation differed according to which additional allegations, if any, were contained in participants’ assigned transcript. As shown in Figure 5, there was no significant difference in the number of participants who rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation as a function of transcript condition ($P = .755$, FET), nor did transcript condition affect participants’ confidence in that verdict (see Figure 6; $F(4, 75) = 0.68$, $p = .61$, $h_p^2 = .04$).

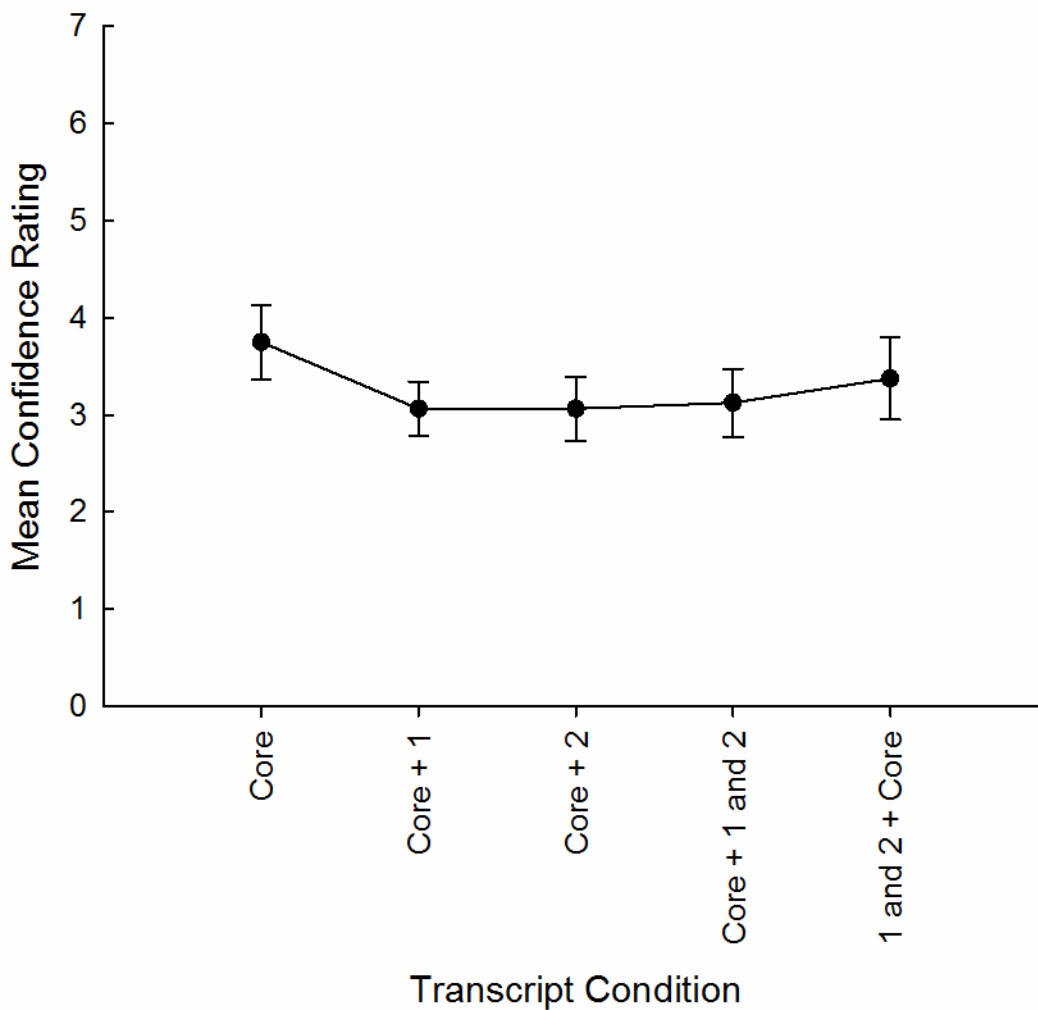


Figure 6. Participants' mean confidence rating of their core allegation verdict, as a function of transcript condition.

We also examined participants' confidence ratings for the verdicts that they rendered to the additional allegations and found no difference as a function of transcript condition (mean confidence ratings for the allegation that Warren made Jasmine take a bath with him and eat her 'poos' ranged from 2.69 to 3.50, $F(2, 45) = 1.65, p = .20, h_p^2 = .07$; and for the allegation that Warren had taken Jasmine to the library and then to another location, where he locked her in a trapdoor and stuck burning paper and a stick up her bottom, the mean confidence ratings ranged from 3.38 to 3.44; $F(2, 45) = 0.08, p = .99, h_p^2 = .00$).

Next, we took a closer look at the pattern of responses for participants whose assigned transcripts had contained additional allegations. In the *Core + 1* condition, 13 out of 16 participants rendered a not guilty verdict to the ‘bath’ allegation; of those 13 participants, 46% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. In the *Core + 2* condition, 12 out of 16 participants rendered a not guilty verdict to the ‘burning paper and stick’ allegation; of those 12 participants, 67% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. Eight out of 16 participants in the *Core + 1 and 2* condition rendered a not guilty verdict to the ‘bath’ allegation; of those 8 participants, 75% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. Eight out of 16 participants also rendered a not guilty verdict to the ‘burning paper and stick’ allegation, and of those 8 participants, again, 75% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. Interestingly in the *1 and 2 + Core* condition, 9 out of the 16 participants rendered a not guilty verdict to the ‘bath’ allegation; of those 9, 44% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. Twelve out of the 16 participants rendered a not guilty verdict to the ‘burning paper and stick’ allegation; of those 12, 42% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation. In addition 7 out of the 16 participants rendered a not guilty verdict to both additional allegations; of those 7, 29% rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation.

Again, we used 4 (Transcript Condition) x 2 (Core Allegation Verdict: Guilty, Not Guilty) ANOVAs to examine whether participants’ ratings of the child’s honesty and cognitive competence differed according to transcript condition or to the verdict rendered to the core allegation. Participants in the *Core Only* condition rated Jasmine as being more honest ($M = 4.45$, $SE = .20$) than did participants in the four other transcript conditions (mean ratings ranged from 3.30 to 3.79; $F(4, 70) = 5.25$, $p = .001$, $h_p^2 = .23$), and participants who rendered a guilty verdict to the core allegation rated Jasmine as being more honest ($M = 3.97$, $SE = .11$) than did participants who rendered a not guilty verdict to the core allegation ($M = 3.37$, $SE = .15$; $F(1, 70) = 10.58$, $p = .002$, $h_p^2 = .13$). There was no interaction. As in

Experiment 1, participants' ratings of Jasmine's cognitive competence did not differ as a function of transcript condition or core allegation verdict, nor was there an interaction (largest $F(1, 70) = 2.81, p = .10, h_p^2 = .04$).

In summary, we found that participants in all five transcript conditions indicated that they believed Jasmine's core allegation against Warren. These results appear to be the same as the results from Experiment 1A, i.e., that even when a child's core allegations are presented with allegations that sound more implausible, mock jurors still believe that something must have happened. The results differ from Experiment 1B in that in Experiment 2, participants believed Jasmine's core allegation regardless of the order the allegations were presented.

General Discussion

The overarching goal of the present study was to determine how mock jurors evaluate a child complainant's credibility and a defendant's guilt when that child's core allegation is presented alone or against a backdrop of additional allegations that include improbable or bizarre details. In two experiments, participants evaluated transcripts of simulated testimony. Some jurors considered only the core allegation (that the defendant hit the child in the school toilets) or they considered that allegation in conjunction with other allegations that included both physical (Experiment 1) or sexual (Experiment 2) abuse. Although most of the participants did not believe that the defendant was guilty of the allegations that contained improbable or bizarre details, they did believe that he was guilty of the core allegation. Much to our surprise, participants who were presented with allegations containing bizarre details did not use that information to alter their view of the defendant's guilt regarding the core allegation or of the child's overall credibility.

Why might this be the case? One possibility is that jurors' decision-making was focused primarily on the age of the child complainant, and that her young age enhanced jurors' willingness to believe the core allegation, irrespective of the other, less plausible claims she made. Research has shown that a child's age is one of the most influential factors in how mock jurors perceive the credibility of child witnesses. In sexual abuse cases, children who are younger than 12 years of age are typically perceived as more credible than adolescent and adult victims (Myers et al., 1999; Nightingale, 1993). When asked why, mock jurors often report that young children lack the cognitive ability and sexual knowledge that is typically needed to make a false allegation (Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Bottoms et al., 2007; Duggan et al., 1989; Gabora, Spanos, & Joab 1993; Goodman, Bottoms, Herscovici, & Shaver, 1989; Nightingale, 1993). For example, Bottoms et al. (2007) found that younger children were perceived as more honest when they alleged sexual abuse due to their lack of

sexual knowledge. This finding is not uncommon. For example, other research has shown that mock jurors found a 6-year-old victim to be more credible than a 14-year-old victim (Bottoms & Goodman, 1994) and 5-year-old victim to be more credible than a 10- or 15-year-old victim (Davies & Rogers, 2009). In cases that emphasise trustworthiness and honesty, younger children may be perceived as more credible because they are viewed as more honest and trustworthy than older children on the basis of the assumption that they lack the cognitive capacity needed to tell a lie (Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Connolly et al., 2010; Nightingale, 1993).

In another study of this kind, Nightingale (1993) reported an inverse relationship between age and credibility. That is, as a sexual abuse victim's age increased, jurors' perceived credibility of that victim decreased. Wright et al. (2010), for example, investigated the perceived honesty of 3- to 18-year-old children. Wright et al. found that both age and gender affected the perceived honesty of the children. For both boys and girls, participants believed that honesty increased until ages 5 to 6. After age 6, participants perception of boys' honesty began to decrease, while their perceived honesty of girls only started to decrease at approximately 10- to 11-years-old (see also Nunez et al., 2011). Researchers have also reported that mock jurors view younger children as more honest than older children, and also as more sexually naïve and lacking the knowledge and cognitive ability to make up such experiences (Bottoms, 1993; Bottoms et al., 1994, 2007; Nightingale, 1993; Ross et al., 2003).

Consistent with past research, some of the participants in the present study used the child complainant's age to justify their decision regarding the credibility of the core allegation. For example, some jurors said: "*why would a child make it up*", "*she's only 6*", "*kids are pretty truthful*", "*too much detail for a child to make up*", "*she's young, she wouldn't be able to make up these stories*", "*weird thing for a 6 year old to make up*",

“details in there that you wouldn’t expect a child to know”. In fact, across all the transcript conditions, the most common reasons that mock jurors provided for rendering a guilty verdict were the child’s age and her perceived honesty. Ironically, perhaps, when it comes to some allegations, a child’s limited cognitive ability increases their perceived credibility (Ross, Dunning, Tolia, & Ceci, 1990).

In addition to the child complainant’s age, there are other reasons why participants may have continued to believe the core allegation even when they did not believe the other, less plausible allegations. One of those reasons involves participants’ perception of the child’s demeanour. Research has shown that a witness’ demeanour can have a powerful effect on jurors’ determination of that witness’ credibility. Demeanour is an individual’s outward behaviour including facial expressions, voice intonation, and displays of emotion (e.g., crying). In the courtroom, a child may cry a little, cry hysterically, or not cry at all while providing their testimony. Kaufmann, Drevland, Wessel, Overskeid, and Magnussen (2003) have argued that jurors’ credibility ratings are influenced more by the complainant’s emotions and/or behaviours than by the facts contained in his or her testimony. For example, Regan and Baker (1998) asked participants to read a courtroom scenario of a 6-year-old girl who accused her father of sexual abuse. When participants were asked to indicate what behaviour they would expect the child to show while testifying, crying was reported most often. In a second experiment in the same study, a new group of participants read the same scenario that was used in the first experiment, but they were told that the child was either calm or crying. Regan and Baker found that more guilty verdicts were delivered in the crying condition than in the calm condition. The child in the crying condition was judged to be more honest, credible, accurate, and reliable.

In a similar study, Golding et al. (2003) asked participants to read a criminal trial summary of sexual assault on a 6- or 15-year-old victim. The victim was described as calm,

teary-eyed, or hysterically crying. Again, more guilty verdicts were rendered, and there was greater victim believability in the teary-eyed condition relative to the calm and hysterically-crying condition. Taken together, these results suggest that too little or too much emotion from the victim negatively affects their perceived credibility in the eyes of mock jurors. Research has also shown that the outcome of a trial is significantly influenced by the demeanour of children who testify in court, especially in cases of suspected sexual abuse (Golding, Dunlap, & Hodell, 2009).

In the present study, participants could not physically see the child testifying. Despite the lack of opportunity to directly observe her, their reasons for believing her included statements about her demeanour: “*she seemed genuine*”, “*she was quite upset*”, “*she cried*”. These results are consistent with the research described above showing that the child’s demeanour influences his or her believability. This finding is particularly true in cases of suspected sexual abuse which might also explain why there were a higher number of guilty verdicts for the child’s allegations in Experiment 2 than in Experiment 1.

Another potential explanation for our mock jurors’ consistent belief in the core allegation is the nature of the questioning by the interviewer. When participants believed the child’s allegation(s), they sometimes referred to the interviewer’s questioning style: “*the questions were not leading*”, “*there was no persuasion from the interviewer*”, “*no ideas were put in her head*”, “*no words were put in her mouth*”. Even though some participants correctly noted that the questioning style used by the interviewer was not leading, this fact alone does not necessarily mean that Jasmine’s testimony was accurate. What these mock jurors failed to appreciate is that there are a number of different ways in which testimony can become contaminated prior to the interview itself. For example, if an interview is conducted using best practice standards (i.e., no leading questions etc), the only conclusion that can be

drawn is that the interviewer did not make the testimony *less accurate*; we cannot conclude that it is free from contamination.

Researchers have shown that when exposed to misinformation about a prior experience, children will report that misinformation, even during free recall, which is understood to be best interviewing practice in forensic interviews (Sutherland & Hayne, 2001; Zajac & Hayne, 2003). For example, in Sutherland and Hayne (2001), 11- to 12-year-old children and adults watched a short video clip either individually (immediate-retention condition) or in groups of 2 to 4 (delayed-retention condition). Immediately after watching the clip, participants completed a questionnaire about the video. Participants were then interviewed either 1 day or 6 weeks after watching the video. During this interview, they were exposed to neutral, leading, and misleading postevent information. The participants then completed the memory test individually 1 day after the postevent information session. The interviewer asked questions in a free recall manner until the participants could not add any additional information to the conversation. At this stage of the interview, the interviewer asked direct (but not misleading) questions. Sutherland and Hayne found that adults provided more information than children, but relevant to the present study, children reported more of the misleading postevent information during free recall. Thus, even under ideal questioning conditions, children reported misinformation that they had encountered prior to the interview.

Another potential explanation for our finding that participants maintained their guilty verdicts in light of additional bizarre and implausible allegations is that the core allegation was highly detailed and jurors interpreted these details as a sign of truth. Research has clearly established that jurors equate highly-detailed accounts with truth telling, irrespective of the age of the witness (e.g., Bell & Loftus, 1985; Klettke & Powell, 2011). In studies conducted specifically with children, prior research has shown that the number of details that a child reports influences jurors' perception of the child's credibility (Yozwiak, Golding, &

Marsil, 2004). The findings of the present study are consistent with past research; the detailed nature of the child's report was one of the most common reasons that mock jurors provided for rendering a guilty verdict. Here, the age of the child links to the amount of detail reported as participants report that there is, "*too much detail in there for a child to make up*".

A final explanation for why the mock jurors in the present study may have ignored the unusual or bizarre claims in the additional allegations may be the fact that there were multiple allegations of abuse. Because the child complainant described more than one event, participants may have inferred that *something* must have happened, and hence made the decision to convict the defendant of the most plausible allegation. This explanation is consistent with research which has examined jurors' perceptions of a child's credibility using single vs repeated events of abuse. Two particular studies used Criterion Based Content Analysis (CBCA), which is a method that researchers and psychological and legal professionals use to analyze children's statements for the presence of features associated with truthful accounts. The CBCA system is the core component of Statement Validity Assessment (SVA), commonly used as an honesty assessment technique in forensic settings. The SVA technique came about because, in cases of abuse, it is difficult to assess the validity of the abuse when often the only witness is the victim. CBCA systematically assesses the truthfulness of a witnesses' spoken testimony of events. CBCA does this by analyzing the content of the child's allegations to detect specific content items (referred to as criteria) that have been hypothesised by Undeustch (1982) and Kohnken (1989) to be signs of the truth. The 18 criteria items are applied to the content of a child's statement and it then gives a probability estimate of the statement's honesty. If a criteria item is present, it is considered to be an indicator of the truthfulness of the child. It is important that the child's age, experience, and skill level is taken into consideration when applying the criteria (e.g., children may not be able to provide as much detail of an event, and detail is one of the CBCA criteria).

Using the CBCA system, Pezdek et al. (2004) and Stromwall, Bengtsson, Leander, and Granhag (2004) found that CBCA scores were higher for child complainants who described multiple instances of abuse than for those who described a single instance of abuse. This finding suggests that allegations of repeated abuse may be more believable than allegations of single events.

In another study, Pozzulo et al. (2010) investigated the relation between multiple allegations and jurors' perceptions of a child's credibility. Jurors were found to be more confident in their verdict when the abuse was repeated. This finding indicates that mock jurors may consider that "more" is worse and "more" is believable (see also Golding et al., 1999) because the victim would be less likely to have misunderstood the situation if the abuse happened more than once. Applying this reasoning to the present study, it may be that when participants were presented with multiple allegations of abuse, they believed that the defendant must be guilty of something, and so they convicted him on the allegation that seemed most plausible. The participants also reported that the information in the child complainant's core allegation was consistent, the complainant did not contradict herself, and the details sounded feasible and plausible. These explanations were often provided by participants for why they convicted the defendants on the child's core allegation but not on the child's additional allegation(s).

The only condition that supported our prediction that jurors who read the transcripts that contained less plausible allegations would have a more negative perception of the child's credibility was in Experiment 1B. Recall that in Experiment 1B, we changed the order of the allegations so that the core allegation was presented last. Most of the participants in this experiment rendered a not guilty verdict to all of the child complainant's allegations. That is, presentation of the less plausible allegations first, influenced participants' decision on the core allegation. When this procedure was replicated in condition 5 of Experiment 2, however,

there was no effect. Why might this be the case? Recall that the additional allegations in Experiment 2 had more explicit details and these details were of a highly unusual sexual nature. It is possible that participants used their preconceived ideas about young children's lack of sexual knowledge as the overriding factor in making their final determination regarding the defendant's guilt (Bottoms & Goodman, 1994; Bottoms et al., 2007; Duggan et al., 1989; Gabora, Spanos, & Joab 1993; Goodman, Bottoms, Herscovici, & Shaver, 1989; Nightingale, 1993). Clearly, the interaction between allegation order and allegation content is an area for further research.

It is important to note that the bulk of the conclusions from this study are based on null results. That is, there was no difference in participants' view of the core allegation whether it was presented alone or in conjunction with other, implausible allegations. At the same time, however, this same basic finding was replicated multiple times with different allegations and the same effect was obtained. Across all of the experiments, there were 7 replications of the same effect. The strength of this repeated finding suggests there are robust effects in decision making among the participants of our study when a decision of guilt or innocence is made. It is important that studies can be replicated, as studies that are able to be reproduced have a lot of strength to their findings. Even though our findings require us to accept the null hypothesis, the replication of this finding lends substantial credibility to the conclusions (see also Nuzzo, 2015; Wells & Windschitl, 1999).

At least two aspects of our procedure may have had additional bearing on the results. For example, our sample consisted of primarily female participants. Prior research has shown that females are more likely to exhibit a pro-victim/pro-prosecution bias in their judgements relative to males. This pattern is particularly strong in cases that involve child sexual abuse. In these cases, women's judgements typically involve a higher number of guilty verdicts and their rating of the believability of the child is higher than those of men (Bottoms et al., 2007;

Quas, Bottoms, Haegerich, & Nysse-Carris, 2002; Redlich, Myers, Goodman, & Qin, 2002; Ross, Hansen, Lindsey, Eslinger, & Hazen, K, 1994; Schutte & Hosch, 1997). In future research, it would be ideal to specifically examine the effect of gender differences on jurors' decision-making using our stimuli. At the same time, however, there is no provision to balance the gender composition of juries in actual trials—so the practical implications of the findings might be somewhat limited.

In addition, our participant sample was made up of university students who were mainly psychology undergraduates. Most of the participants in the sample were 18- to 20-years old. Although this sample would be considered to be younger and potentially more well educated than would be an average jury, studies have rarely found that undergraduate students and community members significantly differ in their ratings of child credibility (Bornstein, 1999; Connolly et al., 2008; Quas et al., 2005).

To the best of our knowledge, the present study is the first to examine how truncating testimony affects mock jurors' perception of a child's credibility and the believability of their allegations. The study has provided a solid foundation for future research. For example, we are currently exploring the effect of this manipulation on juror decision-making when the child's testimony is presented via pre-recorded videotape. In addition, we are also comparing the effects of this manipulation on juror decision-making when they are asked to consider the complainants' allegations as a group, rather than individually, which is what would happen in an actual trial.

Finally, we are also exploring the effects of cross-examination on jurors' decision-making using the present series of allegations. Recall that when a trial goes to court, witnesses are cross-examined by the opposing lawyer. The purpose of cross-examination is for the opposing party to scrutinise, challenge, and test the reliability of a witness' evidence (Ministry of Justice, 2014). The goal of cross-examination is to discredit the witness; the

opposing lawyer often accuses the witness of being dishonest, and uses leading and suggestive and complex questions. Child witnesses have expressed the view that cross-examination is the most distressing and frightening part of the trial (Eastwood & Patton, 2002) and research has shown that cross-examination does not necessarily uncover the truth in children's testimony (Zajac et al., 2003; Zajac & Cannan, 2009; Zajac, Gross, & Hayne, 2003). Despite this, we know that cross-examination does influence juror decision-making. The key question for future research is whether jurors would hold a different view about our child complainant's allegations, if they were also exposed to her responses to cross-examination?

Taken together, the findings of the present study have important implications for the criminal justice system. Eyewitness testimony has a significant impact on the final verdict in a trial. In real-life cases, police, lawyers, judges, and jurors assess the credibility of child witnesses and make the decision as to whether they believe the child or not. It is important that the conditions under which this credibility assessment takes place is fair to all parties involved in the trial. In New Zealand, it is possible for a child to present his or her evidence-in-chief via a pre-recorded interview and for only portions of that interview to be presented to the jury. Despite the prevalence of this practice, there has been minimal research on the potential impact of the practice on jurors' decision-making. The results from the current study clearly show that participants are less likely to believe allegations that contain bizarre or implausible details, but at the same time, exposure to these details does not alter their belief in a more plausible allegation.

Under current legislation, when a trial involves a child complainant, the Judge must balance the needs of the child against the right of a defendant to have a fair trial when deciding whether to allow the child to give his or her evidence via pre-recorded videotape. In addition, the Judge also has the jurisdiction to exclude sections of the child's videotaped

evidence from being presented to the jury. Although no one would disagree that there is a need to minimise stress on child complainants and to maximise their opportunity to tell their story, it is equally important to consider how the presentation of pre-recorded evidence might impact on defendants' right to a fair trial. Legislation in New Zealand and other countries allows for a child's evidence to be truncated for the trial at court. The results of the present study indicate that the effect of truncating a child's evidence does not appear to tip the balance away from preserving the right of a defendant to have a fair trial. In the future, researchers should continue to explore the effects of truncated testimony on juror decision-making as we continue to try to make the criminal justice system as fair as possible for all of those involved.

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Appendix 1

Questions regarding the circumstances of Jasmine's allegation(s)

1. *How likely is it that Jasmine made up the allegation(s) against Warren?
2. How likely is it that Jasmine is telling the truth about the allegation(s) against Warren?
3. How likely is it that Jasmine honestly believes she was assaulted by Warren when really she was not?
4. How likely is it that Jasmine's statements were influenced by the specialist interviewer?
5. #How likely is it that Jasmine reported all the major details about the event(s)?
6. How likely is it that Jasmine remembers all the major details about the event(s) with Warren? #
7. How likely is it that Jasmine reported all the minor details about the event(s) with #Warren?
8. How likely is it that Jasmine remembers all the minor details about the event(s) with #Warren?
9. How likely is it that Jasmine completely understood what happened between her and #Warren?
10. How likely is it that Jasmine is afraid to tell everything that happened with Warren?
11. #How likely is it that Jasmine completely understood all of the questions asked by the specialist interviewer?
12. How likely is it that Jasmine's memory of the event(s) is affected by stress?
13. How likely is it that Jasmine confused an earlier abusive experience with what happened with Warren?
14. How likely is it that Jasmine forgot to tell the specialist interviewer about some things that happened because she was nervous?
15. *How likely is it that Jasmine had a motive to make a report against Warren?
16. *How likely is it that some of the details that Jasmine reported are not accurate?
17. How likely is it that an adult convinced Jasmine to make a false report against Warren?
18. *How likely is it that if Jasmine were questioned again, her story would change?

* Responses used to compile honesty score

Responses used to compile cognitive competence score

Appendix 2A

The core allegation presented to all participants.

- Interviewer: Okay Jasmine, I've been through and pushed the green 'record' button now, so we can start our talk. And the first thing I'll do is say what the time is. It's now 9:38am so just after half-past nine in the morning. My name is Gina Simmons, but when we're talking you can just call me Gina. And the date today is 20th August 2014, and we're at Rotorua Police Station. And the lady sitting in that other room is our monitor, and her name is Kaye Edwards. Her job is to look after the recording equipment and take some notes of what we talk about. And after we've been talking for a while, I'll go next door and check that everything's working okay and to see if Kaye has any more questions for me to ask you. I'll tell you when I'm going to go and do that, okay?
- Child: (Nods head)
- Interviewer: Now, can you tell me your full name?
- Child: It's Jasmine...Phillips.
- Interviewer: Okay, and how old are you, Jasmine?
- Child: I'm 6.
- Interviewer: Okay, do you know when your birthday is?
- Child: It's on October the 6th.
- Interviewer: Okay, thanks Jasmine. So while we're talking in here today, if I ask you a question and you don't know what I mean, then you can tell me and I'll think of a different way to ask the question. And it's okay if you don't know the answer to a question too, okay? You just tell me you don't know.
- Child: (nods head)
- Interviewer: And if you can't remember the answer to a question, you just tell me that too, okay?
- Child: Okay.
- Interviewer: But if you do know the answers to my questions, it's really important that you tell me, okay? Tell me in as much detail as you can, but don't guess anything. Okay?
- Child: Okay.
- Interviewer: And also, if I'm talking about something that you've told me and you think I've got it wrong or mixed up, it's important that you stop me and you tell me. So, for example, I know your name is Jasmine, but if I was to call you Jane by mistake, what would you--?
- Child: It's not.
- Interviewer: It's not your name? Is your name Jane?
- Child: No.

Interviewer: Right, you just tell me it's not your name. Okay?

Child: Okay.

Interviewer: So if I make a mistake while we're talking, you just need to stop me and tell me straight away, okay?

Child: (Nods head)

Interviewer: Can you tell me what it means when you do this? (demonstrates nodding head)

Child: It means yeah.

Interviewer: Okay. Jasmine, now I see you're wearing a school uniform today.

Child: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did you go to school yesterday?

Child: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, so can you tell me everything you did yesterday at school, from the time you got there to the time you went home?

Child: Um... Dad dropped me in the car. And we played before the bell rang.

Interviewer: Okay, so tell me all about the playing.

Child: Um...with the puzzles.

Interviewer: Okay, and you said "we" played, so who do you mean?

Child: Sita and Katie.

Interviewer: Okay, and who are those people?

Child: My friends. In my class.

Interviewer: Okay, and what else can you remember about your morning at school yesterday?

Child: We had stories. The mouse story.

Interviewer: Alright then. And can you remember anything else?

Child: No. Just that.

Interviewer: Nothing else?

Child: (Shakes head)

Interviewer: What does it mean when you shake your head? (demonstrates)

Child: No.

Interviewer: Okay. So before we keep talking, I need to tell you that the most important thing about our time in this room today is that everything you tell me is the truth, and that you don't tell any lies. What does telling the truth mean, Jasmine?

Child: Um, it means...being...true.

Interviewer: And what does telling a lie mean?

Child: Being a liar?

Interviewer: Okay, so let's practice those words. If someone said you were 9 years old, would that be the truth or a lie?

Child: I'm 6.

Interviewer: So would it be the truth or a lie?

Child: That's a liar.

Interviewer: Okay, and if I said you had a blue school uniform on, would that be the truth or a lie?

Child: A truth.

Interviewer: Okay. And if someone said you were a boy, would that be the truth or a lie?

Child: A lie.

Interviewer: How come?

Child: Um...cos it's the truth if I'm a girl.

Interviewer: Okay, and Jasmine, is it best to tell the truth or tell lies?

Child: Best to tell truth.

Interviewer: Do you know why?

Child: Because it's good.

Interviewer: It's good, okay. Do you know what a promise means?

Child: It means when you promise something.

Interviewer: What does it mean?

Child: Um...I....

Interviewer: Let's practice that word, shall we? If you promised you'd get me a drink of water, what would you do?

Child: Um...give it to you?

Interviewer: Okay, and if you promised someone that you would tidy your bedroom, what would you do?

Child: Uh...tidy it.

Interviewer: Okay, so do you keep a promise or do you break a promise?

Child: You keep it.

Interviewer: Okay, so Jasmine, do you make me a promise that everything you tell me is the truth?

Child: Yeah.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. So what have you come here to tell me about today?

Child: The thing with Warren.

Interviewer: Okay, so tell me everything you can remember about that, and don't leave anything out.

Child: He's bad to the kids. Um...he makes us mad.

Interviewer: Tell me more about that. What did he do to make you mad?

Child: He is mean. He...um...he's always mean. I don't like him.

Interviewer: What does he do that's mean?

Child: He hurts us kids.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about that?

Child: He hit me. He hits me all the time.

Interviewer: He hit you? Can you tell everything about when he hit you?

Child: In toilets...in the school toilets. He came in...um... and he came in and he hit me.

Interviewer: Where did he hit you?

Child: In the toilet! I just said!

Interviewer: I'm sorry Jasmine. You did say that. I meant where on your body did he hit you?

Child: My leg. He hit it and he...um...it hurt me. Because...and because...it was really sore.

Interviewer: When he hit you on the leg, tell me all about that.

Child: [points to the window] What's happening out there?

Interviewer: Jasmine, you don't need to worry about what is happening outside. I think someone is mowing the lawn. Can you tell me more about when Warren hit you on your leg?

Child: I was in the toilet. Because...because I felt sick. And...um...I went to the toilets. And...he...he hit me there. In the...in the toilets.

Interviewer: How did that make you feel?

Child: My leg hurt. It hurt. Lots and lots, it did. Really hurt.

Interviewer: And what happened next, Jasmine?

Child: My leg *still* hurted.

Interviewer: What did he hit you with?

Child: On my leg. He whacked it. With his hand. On my leg, here [points]. Like, whack. It really hurt my leg.

Interviewer: Was his hand like this [interviewer shows open hand], or like this [interviewer shows closed fist] or some other way?

Child: It was like this [child shows closed fist] and it made my leg hurt heaps and heaps, it did.

Interviewer: Did you notice anything about your leg after he hit you with his fist?

Child: [child nods head]

Interviewer: What did you notice?

Child: ummmmmm [Pause] I'm going to ballet after this.

Interviewer: That sounds like good fun. Jasmine, can you tell me if you noticed anything about your leg after Warren hit you with his fist?

Child: It was sort of purpley.

Interviewer: Do you mean your leg was purple?

Child: The sore bit. Here [points] on my leg. Just here. That bit there. Right there.

Interviewer: Was your leg purple for a short time or a long time or something else?

Child: Ages. I cried. I cried a lot...uh...after he did that.

Interviewer: Did Warren say anything when he hit your leg?

Child: He...uh...said mean things.

Interviewer: Can you remember exactly what he said, Jasmine? Can you tell me what he said?

Child: He doesn't like kids. He said that. [inaudible] He said it.

Interviewer: And Jasmine, what happened after you were in the toilet?

Child: I ran away. He hitted me and so I ran away.

Interviewer: Jasmine, has the hitting happened one time or more than once?

Child: Just that time. That time he was mean to me in the toilet.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you want to tell me about that, Jasmine?

Child: That's all. [pause] I'm tired now.

Appendix 2B

Additional allegation 1 for Experiment 1.

- Interviewer: Jasmine, I know that you are a bit tired, but I need to ask you just a few more questions, okay?
- Child: Uhh...okay.
- Interviewer: Is there anything else you want to tell me today?
- Child: He [inaudible] in...in the cupboard...where the brooms are.
- Interviewer: Pardon? Can you speak up for me, Jasmine? What happened in the cupboard?
- Child: He locked it. We...um...we were in there. And he...he went and locked us there.
- Interviewer: Who locked you in the cupboard?
- Child: Warren. With the brooms. He locked us where...where...he kept the brooms. In the dark.
- Interviewer: Warren locked you in the cupboard with the brooms?
- Child: hmmmmmm
- Interviewer: Jasmine, can you tell me more about when that happened?
- Child: He grabbed us...us kids.
- Interviewer: He grabbed you?
- Child: hmmmmmmm
- Interviewer: Who was with you?
- Child: Jack and...um...maybe Ruby.
- Interviewer: Warren grabbed you and Jack and Ruby and locked you in the cupboard with the brooms?
- Child: He doesn't like us kids. He's mean. He's a mean man.
- Interviewer: Who was with you, Jasmine?
- Child: I told you! Jack and maybe Ruby. Yeah, I think Ruby.
- Interviewer: How did it make you feel when he locked you in the cupboard?
- Child: We all cried. And we were really scared.

Interviewer: What happened in the cupboard?

Child: We cried there.

Interviewer: Where is the cupboard that you're talking about, Jasmine?

Child: At my school. Near the toilets. The toilets for girls. The girls' ones.

Interviewer: What else can you tell me?

Child: It was dark. Um...and I don't like it. And he was mean.

Interviewer: Did Warren say anything when he locked you in the cupboard?

Child: He said...um...he said "Don't tell or I will hit you with a broom." He yelled that to me. "DON'T TELL!"...like that.

Interviewer: How long were you in the cupboard?

Child: A long time. Really long.

Interviewer: And what happened after that?

Child: He let us out and we ran away.

Interviewer: You ran away? Okay. And did this happen in the morning or afternoon or some other time?

Child: Yeah. It did. And...um... [child walks away]

Interviewer: Jasmine, can you come back here and sit next to me? We are almost done.

Interviewer: [Child returns]. Thank you, Jasmine.

Interviewer: Can you tell me anything else you can remember about the time Warren locked you in the broom cupboard?

Child: He locked us in there. Me and Jack and Ruby.

Interviewer: And do Jack and Ruby go to school with you?

Child: In my class. It's Room 6. Mrs Henderson. Do you know her? She has stickers.

Interviewer: No, I don't know her, but she sounds nice. Jasmine, is there anything else you can tell me about that time in the broom cupboard?

Child: It was dark. And scary.

Interviewer: Dark and scary. Okay. And has that happened any other times or just once?

Child: Just once. At my school.

Interviewer: Okay.

Appendix 2C

Additional allegation 2 for Experiment 1.

- Interviewer: Jasmine, is there anything else that you can tell me about the things that happened with Warren?
- Child: [inaudible]
- Interviewer: Pardon? Can you speak up so that my microphone can hear you?
- Child: I have a dog. Coco. He's so hairy. Mum says "he's too hairy!" He leaves hair places. Everywhere. On the couch. And everywhere, like on my bed.
- Interviewer: Hmmmmm. I know that you're tired, Jasmine, but it is important that we do these questions. Can you tell me anything else about Warren?
- Child: About the time.....ummm....about the time he took me in the car?
- Interviewer: The car? Can you tell me about that?
- Child: He grabbed me. Put me...um...putted me in the car.
- Interviewer: He grabbed you and put you in the car?
- Child: Yeah.
- Interviewer: Where were you when he grabbed you?
- Child: In the playground. At the school playground. Like on the swing and slides.
- Interviewer: Can you tell me more about when Warren grabbed you?
- Child: He- he...grabbed me and drove in his car.
- Interviewer: His car? What kind of car, do you know?
- Child: Green. It's not really a car. It's a truck. A big truck, like a- a- green one. Toyota, a bit like my Dad's one.
- Interviewer: What else can you tell me about that time you went in the car?
- Child: He grabbed me and put me in his car and drove me...um...and [pause] there was a cave. A big dark cave. His friends were there. They were laughing. And sticks, throwing sticks. Mean friends.
- Interviewer: Jasmine, can you tell me who else was there?
- Child: Warren and...um...some friends. He had mean mean friends there.

Interviewer: Did you recognise any of his friends? Have you seen them before?

Child: I don't like them. They're not good. They...they're not nice.

Interviewer: How many friends were there?

Child: Heaps. Three.

Interviewer: Do you know their names?

Child: I think one was called...Butch and maybe...Smokey. In the cave. And throwing the sticks.

Interviewer: What did the other men look like?

Child: Like mean men. And one had like a mean man beard. I think he smelled bad. Like poos. [giggles]

Interviewer: Jasmine, can you remember what the men were wearing? What were their clothes like?

Child: One was...um...dressed like a wizard. Uh...the other man had a sword. [child motions as if sword-fighting]

Interviewer: Jasmine, what did the men do?

Child: They said mean things and...um...threw some sticks. And the man with the sword hit me on the head. And I- I- bled a bit.

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about what they were doing?

Child: [Pause]

Interviewer: Anything else about that, Jasmine?

Child: [inaudible]

Interviewer: What did you say, Jasmine? Speak up for me please?

Child: Taking a picture.

Interviewer: Who took pictures? Did Warren take pictures?

Child: [Pause] The mean men took pictures. And...um...they did laughing.

Interviewer: They were laughing and taking pictures. How did that make you feel?

Child: I felt mad. And sad. And I said where's my mum. And I want my mum.

Interviewer: What happened next?

Child: We stayed there and then we...we... we went back.

Interviewer: You went back where?

Child: To school. Driving really really super fast. Like, whoosh! Before the bell rang.

Appendix 3A

Additional allegation 1 for Experiment 2.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that Warren did to you?

Child: He made me go in the bath with him

Interviewer: He made you go in the bath with him?

Child: Mym

Interviewer: Whereabouts was the bath?

Child: Upstairs

Interviewer: Upstairs: Whereabouts?

Child: It was up, I don't know, it was upstairs in some room.

Interviewer: Yeah

Child: But I don't know, Oh I don't know where exactly it was.

Interviewer: Yeah, was it at the school or somewhere else?

Child: It was at his house

Interviewer: Oh at his house. So he made you have a bath with him at his house?

Child: Yeah

Interviewer: And who was there when you had a bath with Warren?

Child: His friends

Interviewer: Oh, hmmm. What were his friends' names?

Child: Why are you asking?

Interviewer: Why am I asking?

Child: Yeah

Interviewer: Well, why do think that I want to know that?

Child: Yeah, well, I don't know them

Interviewer: Oh, you don't know the names of the friends?

Child: No but the there's there his friends names um I think one of the their friends names starts with R

Interviewer: With R?

Child: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah and what did it sound like, what was, what does the name sound like?

Child: Mym, I don't know. I can't remember. Something like Robert.

Interviewer: Robert, hmmm. What did he look like? What did Robert look like?

Child: Hmmm, I think one of his friends was old and had a beard.

Interviewer: Hmmm, and what colour was the beard?

Child: Grey

Interviewer: It was a grey beard and he was old?

Child: I think so anyhow

Interviewer: Yeah. What sort of clothes did he wear?

Child: Oh.

Interviewer: You remember anything about his clothes or not?

Child: No, just like normal

Interviewer: Hmmm.

Child: Clothes like old people wear, grey clothes.

Interviewer: Were they shorts or trousers or

Child: Trousers

Interviewer: So when you had a bath upstairs with Warren,

Child: Mym

Interviewer: What was his friend doing?

Child: Um ah, I think he was just up and around

Interviewer: Mym

Child: He was being smart with some other children

Interviewer: Which children were they?

Child: I can't remember, but other children

Interviewer: Okay, so how did you, so what made you have a bath with Warren?

Child: He made me

Interviewer: He made you?

Child: Yep

Interviewer: Tell me how he made you have a bath with him. What did he do to make you?

Child: If I didn't have a bath with him, he'd say he'd make me

Interviewer: How would he do that?

Child: By getting me undressed

Interviewer: Mym, hmmm. So how did your clothes when you were in the bath, when you were in the bath, whereabouts were your clothes?

Child: They were on the floor

Interviewer: Right and how did they get on the floor?

Child: That was when I took them off

Interviewer: Yeah

Child: That's when I took them off

Interviewer: Okay and where whereabouts were Warren's clothes?

Child: Um, his clothes were like on the floor

Interviewer: Yeah, how did they get off?

Child: He took them off

Interviewer: Im, hmm, what was the water like in the bath? Was is cold water or hot water or...?

Child: Hot

Interviewer: Normal bath water or?

Child: Medium size

Interviewer: Medium and what did you do in the bath?

Child: He ah he made me eat his poos, and no no, he made me um, yeah he made me eat my poos and then he said next time you come here I'll eat mine and he didn't

Interviewer: Im

Child: He tricked me

Interviewer: What did the poos taste like?

Child: Yuck

Interviewer: What did you feel like when he made you eat his poos?

Child: Sad.

Interviewer: Your poos. You felt sad.

Child: Sad

Interviewer: So how did he make you eat it?

Child: If I didn't eat it...he would do it himself when he got a whole load

Interviewer: So how many times did you have a bath with Warren?

Child: About twice

Interviewer: And what happened after he made the poos go in your mouth? What happened after that?

Child: Nothing much. That's all he did.

Appendix 3B

Additional allegation 2 for Experiment 2.

- Interviewer: Is there anything else that you can tell me?
- Child: Um well, he took me to the library building?
- Interviewer: Yeah
- Child: And ah there was a trap door there
- Interviewer: There was a trap door? Yeah. What colour was the building?
- Child: Grey
- Interviewer: Could you draw the building for me?
- Child: Yeah, but where's a different one....I get bored with.....
- Interviewer: So how did Warren take you to the building? How did you get there?
- Child: In the car
- Interviewer: Hmm. Who drove the car?
- Child: Warren
- Interviewer: Warren drove it. And where did he, where did, where were you before he put you in the car, where would he take you from?
- Child: Um a he he didn't go anywhere, he just said he was going for a walk and um, he really went to the house and his mother was there.
- Interviewer: So, you're talking about the house or this building here?
- Child: On no I talking about....
- Interviewer: Okay so there were
- Child: And in the house, his mother was there
- Interviewer: At this building was the trap door
- Child: Yeah
- Interviewer: What did his mother look like?
- Child: Oh she was all grey
- Interviewer: Yeah

Child: She wore grey clothes and she had hair like my bushy hair with a bit of curls.

Interviewer: Hmm and how did you know that it was his mother?

Child: Cos he told me

Interviewer: Okay, so whereabouts was the building with the trap door, was it do you know where it was? Was it close to the shops or to the school?

Child: Mym, it was close to the shops

Interviewer: Which shops?

Child: Ooooooh, I don't know, it was a shop though

Interviewer: And there was, you mentioned something about a library. What was the bit about the library?

Child: Ah, the library had a trap door on it

Interviewer: Oh, okay

Child: And there was these books and he tried to make me grow up and hurt children

Interviewer: The books said that?

Child: Yes.

Child: He made us step through the trap door, it was open about ah that deep.

Interviewer: Yeah

Child: And then and he took some of the kids to his mother's house

Interviewer: Hmmmm

Child: And that was on the hills...and it was well they were there...they left us in the trap door for half an hour and while he went to grandmother's house for half an hour.

Interviewer: I see

Child: And left us in the trap door on our own. And he took us to the pool and dropped us in the pool.

Interviewer: Im hym, did anything else happen in the trap door?

Child: No, we just stood around and waited

Interviewer: Who let you out?

Child: Warren came back.

Interviewer: Hmmmmm....did he say anything when he came back or not?

Child: He said lots of swear words?

Interviewer: Yeah and and what happened when he came? Warren let you out?

Child: Yeah and he said if if you'll tell.....um I'll leave you in here for ever and never come back and get you.

Interviewer: And were there other adults at that building with the library and the trap door?

Child: Yeah, 20 of his friends. Hatchet and Smellyhead

Interviewer: Hatchet and smellyhead:

Child: Yeah, but that wasn't their real names. I knew. I know that.

Interviewer: So what did Warren do to you at the trap door building? Which room he hurt you in?

Child: Which room did he hurt me in, um why one of the rooms where no one was in on the second floor.

Interviewer: What did he do to you, to hurt you?

Child: What did he do to hurt me? Oh well he kicked me and punched me and stuck a sharp stick up my bum.

Interviewer: Which part of your bum did the stick go?

Child: In the, in the poos hole

Interviewer: What did it feel like on your poo hole?

Child: It feeled, made it bleed

Interviewer: Where did the blood go?

Child: On the floor and he done and he cleaned it up and he done that five times and he stuck a burning piece of paper up my bum five times, so that means it bleed um 10 times

Interviewer: And who was there when he stick a stick up your bum?

Child: Um his mother, no his friend stuck thi um um burning paper and Warren.

Interviewer: Who did the burning paper?

Child: Um, his friends and he and so his friends on the sharp stick and the burning paper and Warren and his mum were taking photos and while bum was bleeding, they were laughing.

Interviewer: What did you feel like?

Child: Just sad because it wasn't funny at all.

Interviewer: Did the blood go anywhere else or not

Child: No....on the flippen floor.

Interviewer: Okay, so what did the stick look like? Where did it come from?

Child: It was in some like a treasure box with all the paper and it was, it was like it was a treasure box and um that they made out of wood and they and they put about oh god knows, 20 pieces of paper in that box and they put a lighter and um about five sharp sticks and then they shut the thing and locked it.

Interviewer: Where did they keep the box?

Child: In the secret cupboard.

Interviewer: And who was in charge of the secret cupboard?

Child: Oh, one of them, the leader was Smellyhead. It wasn't his real name.

Interviewer: What did Smellyhead look like?

Child: He had a bald head.

Interviewer: He was bald?

Child: Well, he was bald, with hairy hands like one of my adult friends.

Interviewer: Okay, thank you Jasmine. I think we are all done.