"I KNOW HIM!": DOES WITNESS-DEFENDANT FAMILIARITY IMPACT MOCK JURORS ACROSS DIFFERENT AGED WITNESSES AND TYPES OF CRIME?

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The current study examined whether eyewitness age (5-, 10-, 15-years-old), eyewitness familiarity with the defendant (personally familiar, casually familiar, stranger), and nature of the crime (personal, non-personal) influenced jurors' judgments. Undergraduate students (N = 568) read a case summary where the eyewitness reported being victim to an abduction or victim of a bike theft and were asked to render a dichotomous verdict, continuous guilt rating, and answer questions regarding their perceptions of the defendant and the eyewitness' identification. Familiarity and nature of the crime interacted to influence guilt ratings, perceptions of the defendant, and perceptions of the eyewitness' identification. Jurors reported higher guilt ratings, lower perceptions of the defendant, and were more likely to believe the eyewitness' identification was accurate when the eyewitness and defendant were familiar with each other and the crime was personal compared to non-personal. These results suggest familiarity between witnesses and defendants can influence jurors' perceptions and how believable the eyewitness identification is perceived to be.

Keywords: eyewitness age; familiarity; nature of crime; juror decision making; child eyewitness

Eyewitness evidence is arguably one of the most persuasive forms of evidence presented in the courtroom. When an eyewitness makes a positive identification of the person who committed the alleged crime, jurors are likely to believe that identification is accurate (Brewer & Wells, 2011). The research these conclusions are based on typically involve identifications of a stranger, that is, someone the eyewitness had never met before. Intriguingly, crime often occurs between individuals who have had some "interaction". For example, Flowe, Mehta, and Ebbesen (2011) examined criminal cases and found that eyewitnesses often are familiar with the perpetrator such that the defendant and at least one eyewitness knew each other in roughly half of the crime reported. Now, researchers

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are beginning to examine how jurors may perceive a familiar-stranger, that is, someone the eyewitness had previously encountered prior to the commission of the crime.

The few studies that have examined the influence of familiarity on jurors' decisions have produced mixed results. Some studies have found that familiarity increases the likelihood that the defendant will be found guilty (e.g., Sheahan, Pozzulo, Reed, & Pica, 2017) while others have found no influence at all (e.g., Pozzulo, Pettalia, Bruer, & Javaid, 2014). In addition to familiarity, the age of the eyewitness also has been influential, specifically in cases of sexual assault. Younger witnesses (up to age 10-years-old) may be viewed as less credible than older witnesses (12-years or older) in crimes that are non-sexual (Bruer & Pozzulo, 2014; Pozzulo & Dempsey, 2009; Wright, Hanoteau, Parkinson, & Tatham, 2010). Unfortunately, far fewer studies tend to examine young witnesses in non-sexual abuse cases. Although, once again the research is not necessarily in keeping with reality. Young children can be witnesses to a variety of crimes. For example, Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, Hamby, and Kracke (2009) reported that roughly 25% of children under the age of 18 (N = 4,549) were exposed to violence in their homes, schools, and communities one year prior to the survey; crime included, shootings, thefts, and sometimes murder.

Consider the case of Elizabeth Smart, and her sister Mary Katherine who was the sole eyewitness to Elizabeth's abduction (Associated Press, 2011). Mary Katherine was nine-years-old when she was witness to her sister's abduction. While at first she did not recognize the man who abducted her sister, she did say that his voice sounded familiar. It was not until four months later when it "clicked" and she realized the person who abducted her sister was a man who had done odd jobs around the Smart's house a few months prior to the abduction. While it is unknow, and even though Mary Katherine was only nine-years-old, perhaps the police were more apt to believe Mary Katherine's memories because she reported being familiar with the perpetrator and it was a highly personal crime. Because of cases like Elizabeth Smart's where a perpetrator has some familiarity with a witness and the witness is not necessarily the victim of a sexual assault, and who also may be younger it is important to understand how all of these factors may influence a jury, especially when the eyewitness to the crime is also the victim. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to examine the combined role of familiarity, eyewitness age, and the nature of the crime on mock juror decision making.

Eyewitness Age

While research has typically found that older eyewitnesses are perceived more favorably than younger eyewitnesses, research examining eyewitness age has yielded mixed results. Given that children are often the only eyewitnesses to a crime (Goodman, Golding, Helgeson, Haith, & Michelli, 1987), it is important to understand how they are perceived across a variety of contexts. For example, some research has found that perceptions of witness credibility increase with age (e.g., Bruer & Pozzulo, 2014; Pozzulo & Dempsey, 2009; Wright et al., 2010). However, when the child is described as a victim, such as in a child sexual abuse case, younger eyewitnesses are perceived as more credible than an adult eyewitness (Goodman et al., 1987). While the current study did not examine an adult eyewitness, an adolescent eyewitness was examined (i.e., 15-years-old) and some studies with

adolescent eyewitnesses have found that adolescent eyewitnesses are perceived similarly to that of adult eyewitnesses (Bruer & Pozzulo, 2014; Pozzulo et al., 2014) while others find that adolescent eyewitnesses are viewed more negatively than younger eyewitnesses (e.g., Gabora, Spanos, & Joab, 1993; Nunez, Kehn, & Wright, 2011). The inconsistencies in the findings regarding perceptions of adolescent eyewitnesses warrants further examination to determine whether adolescents are perceived more (or less) positively than children in certain contexts.

While there are inconsistencies in how the age of the eyewitness influences jurors, research does reliably demonstrate that eyewitness age is, in fact, influential. It is important to understand whether eyewitness age could combine with familiarity to influence jurors' decisions. Specifically, it is possible that mock jurors may view children as more credible in their testimony when they are familiar with the defendant, regardless of the nature of the crime. Furthermore, given that research has found that three in five children have been exposed to at least one act of violence, either as a bystander or eyewitness (Finkelhor, Turner, Shattuck, & Hamby, 2015), research examining jurors' perceptions of child identification abilities is crucial. Moreover, research has found that eyewitnesses knew the defendant in roughly half of all trials as reported by Flowe and colleagues (2011); therefore, a child eyewitness may become witness to a crime where he or she is familiar with the perpetrator.

Eyewitness Familiarity with the Defendant

Gross, Jacoby, Matheson, Montgomery, and Patel (2005) examined exonerations in the United States that occurred between 1989 and 2003 and found that the defendants were familiar with one or more of the eyewitnesses in 86% of murder cases. Because of this, it is important to understand how this familiarity can influence potential jurors. Researchers suggest that familiar faces can be recognized quickly (and accurately; Bruce, Carson, Burton & Kelly, 1998) and without conscious efforts (e.g., Morrison, Bruce, & Burton, 2000); because of this, it is important to understand how an eyewitness' identification of a familiar individual influences jurors' decisions. Moreover, familiar face identification is robust across a variety of conditions whereas unfamiliar face identification is less robust and can be influenced by various factors (e.g., Bindemann, Avetisyan, & Rakow, 2012; Wells & Olson, 2003). Given that researchers have demonstrated the persuasiveness of unfamiliar, and thus highly error-prone, identifications, it is critical that researchers examine the persuasiveness of familiar, and thus robust, identifications, especially given the frequency in which an eyewitness may be familiar with his or her perpetrator. Although familiarity is subjective and has yet to be concretely defined in the juror decision-making literature, there are a handful of studies that have examined the impact familiarity between the witness and defendant may have on mock jurors. Social psychological researchers have examined how familiarity develops and the most common explanation is the mere exposure effect (Zajonc, 1968) which suggests that the more we are exposed to an individual, the more familiar we will become with that individual. Additionally, researchers have found that the longer we are exposed to a stimulus, the more familiar we may perceive ourselves to be with that stimulus (Mandler, 2008).

Given that no concrete definition of familiarity has been established when examining jurors' decisions, researchers have started with exposures. One of the earliest studies that examines familiarity conceptualized it as "exposure duration", that is, how long the witness was exposed to the perpetrator (Lindsay, Lim, Marando, & Cully, 1986). Lindsay and colleagues had participants listen to a mock burglary trial where the eyewitness reported seeing the defendant for less than five seconds, 30 minutes, or 30 minutes plus an interaction with the perpetrator. While there were no differences in guilt ratings across these conditions, Lindsay and colleagues did find that jurors did not think five seconds was long enough to be able to make an accurate identification; these results suggest that mere exposure duration may not be enough to warrant that sense of familiarity.

Alternatively, Pozzulo and colleagues (2014) conceptualized familiarity as the number of exposures (i.e., 0, 3, or 6 times) to the defendant prior to the crime. This conceptualization of familiarity also did not influence guilt ratings or perceptions of the testimony. This may have been due to the fact that it was a brief interaction between the eyewitness and defendant each time they saw each other (e.g., a few minutes). Sheahan and colleagues (2017) further examined number of exposures such that the eyewitness and defendant saw each other zero times prior or eight times while the eyewitness shopped in a convenience store. Sheahan and colleagues found that eight exposures were enough to warrant a sense of familiarity; mock jurors were more likely to vote guilty for the defendant and assign higher guilt ratings when the eyewitness was described as being familiar with him using this operationalization. More recently, Pica, Sheahan, Mesesan, and Pozzulo (2017) examined familiarity in terms of the relationship shared between the eyewitness and defendant across three studies and found that when the eyewitness and defendant shared a personal relationship, the defendant received higher guilt ratings compared to when the eyewitness and defendant were strangers.

Familiarity appears to be influential when the number of exposures is high (Sheahan et al., 2017) or when a personal relationship is shared between the eyewitness and defendant (Pica et al., 2017). However, it is still unclear what jurors may perceive as 'personal'. Pica and colleagues (2017) defined personally familiar as an uncle and a current teacher. It is important to understand how close a relationship must be in order for jurors to believe a relationship is considered familiar. Therefore, the current study varied familiarity in terms of familiar-personal (teacher), familiar-casual (pizza delivery guy), and stranger. We predicted that when the eyewitness and defendant shared a familiar-personal relationship the defendant would receive more guilty verdicts and higher guilt ratings compared to when the eyewitness and defendant were strangers.

Familiarity and eyewitness age. In addition to familiarity, Pozzulo and colleagues (2014) also examined whether eyewitness age was influential (4-, 12-, or 20-years-old). While age did not interact with familiarity to influence jurors' decisions, mock jurors were more likely to perceive the older eyewitness as more credible than the younger eyewitness. Sheahan and colleagues (2017) also found no combination of familiarity and witness age on jurors' judgments nor an effect of age. However, Sheahan and colleagues found familiarity to significantly influence jurors' judgments, therefore, familiarity may have been a

more important factor than the witness' age. Given that the crimes involved in the current study did not involve child sexual assault, we predicted that the older eyewitness would be perceived more favorably than the younger eyewitness when the eyewitness and defendant were strangers, but that the perceptions of the younger eyewitness would increase as familiarity with the defendant increased.

Nature of the Crime

Another factor that has been shown to influence jurors' perceptions of eyewitness testimony is the type of crime witnessed. Researchers have found that the nature of the crime committed can influence jurors' perceptions; for example, crimes against persons are seen as more severe than crimes against property (e.g., Sanderson, Zanna, & Darley, 2000). However, little research has examined how the type of crime influences jurors across different contexts. Ghetti and Redlich (2001) examined whether type of crime and outcome of crime influenced perceptions of juvenile defendants and found that both were influential. The crime committed was either against a person (i.e., firing a gun) or against property (i.e., arson); moreover, whether the victim was injured or died varied. Across all ages, when the defendant committed a crime against a person, he received a harsher sentence compared to when he committed a crime against property; additionally, more punitive sentences were given when the victim was killed versus injured. The harshest sentence was given when the defendant shot and killed the victim. These results suggest that, regardless of age, the type of crime can influence jurors' judgments.

Additionally, another way in which the nature of the crime can influence jurors' judgments is the role of the witness in the crime. For example, a witness may view a theft (i.e., witness-bystander) or a witness may be a victim to a sexual assault (i.e., a witness-victim). McCauley and Parker (2001) examined whether type of crime (and as an extension, type of witness) influenced jurors' judgments when the child was described as 6- or 13-years-old in a robbery or sexual assault case. While there was no effect of age, crime type was influential such that the witness was rated as more credible, and the defendant was given more guilty verdicts, when the crime was sexual assault. However, it is unclear whether this is due to the type of crime itself or the type of witness as there was no interaction.

Pozzulo, Dempsey, and Fox (2011) examined how crime type may interact with witness age and identification decision on jurors' judgments. The witness was either 10- or 25-years-old and was witness to a physical (i.e., assault) or non-physical (i.e., drug deal) crime where the eyewitness made a positive identification of the suspect, a foil identification, or no identification. Only identification was found to be significant whereby when the eyewitness made a positive identification, the defendant received higher guilt ratings and the eyewitness was perceived more positively. Pozzulo and colleagues suggest that the null finding of crime type may be due to the fact that the witness was only a bystander whereas previous research varied witness type (e.g., McCauley & Parker, 2001). Walker and Woody (2011) also examined the influences of crime type, crime outcome, and defendant age (as opposed to witness age) on jurors' decisions. The crime was described as a second-degree burglary or an aggravated robbery where the outcomes were either mild or severe ($500 in property theft or medical bills versus $5000 in property theft or medical bills, respectively).

Similar to prior research, crimes committed against a person resulted in more guilty verdicts and harsher sentences compared to crimes committed against property.

The results of these few studies suggest that the nature of the crime committed can influence how jurors perceive the defendant, reflected in their verdicts and sentencing decisions. The current study varied the nature of the crime between personal and non-personal (abduction versus theft, respectively). We were interested in whether eyewitness age would play a role combined with the type of crime witnessed as well as the witness' familiarity with the defendant. Additionally, given that we varied familiarity, we predicted that when the crime was personal, and the eyewitness and defendant were familiar with each other, the defendant would receive more guilty verdicts and higher guilt ratings compared to when the crime was non-personal, regardless of eyewitness age.

The Current Study

The purpose of this study was to determine which factors may influence juror decision making. In this study, we manipulated the age of the victim, the familiarity between the victim and the defendant and the nature of the crime to determine how these factors may influence juror decision making. Wanted to examine different levels of familiarity that people may encounter given that this area of research is relatively new and previous research has established that a biological-familiar relationship is highly influential (e.g., Pica et al., 2017). This research is important as jurors may be influenced by factors that are related to the defendant and/or the victim/eyewitness instead of the facts of the case when they are making their decisions. Also, there is almost no research examining how familiarity and the type of crime interact with witness age to influence juror decision-making.

METHOD

Participants

Participants (N = 568; 73.4% female) were undergraduate students recruited from a university in Eastern Ontario, Canada. All participants were juror-age eligible in Ontario (i.e., over the age of 18). Participants' age ranged from 18- to 70-years-old (M = 21.33, SD = 5.83). The majority of participants (62.9%) identified themselves as White/Caucasian, with a considerable number of Asians (21.0%), a small number of Black/African-Americans (9.9%), Latino/Latinas (1.6%), Aboriginal-Canadians (3.0%) and those who identified themselves as either mixed or "other" (5.8%). Participants received course credit for their participation in the study.

Design

A 3 (familiarity of eyewitness with defendant: personally familiar vs. casually familiar vs. stranger) x 3 (witness age: 5 vs. 10 vs. 15-years-old) x 2 (nature of the crime: personal (abduction) vs. impersonal (theft)) between subjects design was used. The dependent variables included participants' (1) dichotomous guilt, (2) continuous guilt ratings, (3) perceptions of the eyewitness' identification, and (4) perceptions of the defendant.

Materials

Case summary. Eighteen versions of a one-page mock case summary were created that varied eyewitness familiarity with the defendant, eyewitness age, and nature of the crime. All other details of the case summary were held constant. The eyewitness was walking home through a park that she walked every day. In the theft condition, the eyewitness saw the defendant approach a bike and then drag it towards his van; in the abduction condition, the eyewitness was grabbed and dragged towards and into the van. Each summary began with instructions from the judge, followed by a summary of where the crime took place and how it happened, and instructions to the jury on their duty as jurors.

Verdict. Participants were asked to rate the degree to which they felt that the defendant was guilty on a 100-point rating scale (1 = Not Guilty, 100 = Guilty). Participants also were asked to render a dichotomous guilty verdict for the defendant (i.e., guilty or not guilty).

Perception of eyewitness and defendant. Participants were asked to rate the eyewitness' accuracy in her identification of the defendant on a 0 (not at all) to 100 (very much so) scale. Additionally, participants were asked how responsible they thought the defendant was, whether the defendant intended to commit the crime, whether they believed the defendant was the one to commit the crime, and how likely it was the defendant who committed the crime on 0 (not at all) to 100 (very much so) scales.

Procedure

Data were collected with the online survey tool Qualtrics. Upon signing up for the study, participants were given a unique study URL. Each participant was then randomly assigned to one of the eighteen conditions. In order to complete the entire study, participants were instructed to read through the mock case summary prior to filling out a series of questionnaires. Once all questionnaires were completed, participants reached the end of the study at which point they were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

RESULTS

Dichotomous Verdict

A sequential logistic regression was conducted with dichotomous guilt (guilty/not guilty) as the dependent variable and familiarity, witness age, and the nature of the crime as the independent variables. The first model included only the main effects, the second model included the main effects and two-way interactions, and the third model included the main effects, two-way interactions, and the three-way interaction. The first model was not significant, $\chi^2(5) = 5.64$, $p = .34$. Given that the first model was not significant, and did not add to the overall model, the remaining models also could not have added to the overall model. Therefore, the eyewitness' age, familiarity with the defendant, and the nature of the crime did not influence mock jurors' dichotomous verdicts.

Continuous Guilt

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine whether familiarity, witness age, and/or the nature of the crime influenced mock jurors' continuous guilt ratings. There was a significant main effect of crime type, $F(1, 436) = 10.18$, $p = .002$, $\eta p2 = .02$. Mock jurors were more likely to assign higher guilt ratings to the defendant when the nature of the crime was personal ($M = 79.33$, $SD = 21.94$) compared to theft ($M = 73.16$, $SD = 23.71$). There also was a main effect of witness age, $F(2, 436) = 3.89$, $p = .02$, $\eta p2 = .02$. Follow-up Tukey post hoc tests revealed that mock jurors were more likely to assign higher guilt ratings to the defendant when the eyewitness was 15-years-old (M = 79.87, SD = 19.95) compared to 10-years-old *M*diff = 6.49, SE = 2.58, p = .03. No other differences were significant. There also was a significant interaction between nature of the crime and familiarity, $F(2, 436) = 6.95$, $p = .001$, $\eta p2 = .03$. Follow-up tests revealed that mock jurors were more likely to assign higher guilt ratings to the defendant when the defendant was personally familiar, and the crime was personal ($M = 83.49$, $SD = 18.59$) compared to non-personal ($M = 67.51$, $SD = 27.46$), $t(145) = -4.10$, $p < .001$. There were no significant differences when the eyewitness and defendant were strangers and when the eyewitness and defendant were casually familiar with each other (i.e., a pizza delivery person). There were no other significant effects.

Perceptions of the Defendant

Mock jurors were asked questions pertaining to their perceptions of the defendant, all of which were significantly correlated with each other ($p < .01$), as such a composite scale was created ($\alpha = .93$); higher scores indicate more negative perceptions of the defendant. An ANOVA was conducted to determine whether the independent variables influenced mock jurors' perceptions of the defendant. There was a significant main effect of the nature of the crime, $F(1, 533) = 5.35$, $p = .02$, $\eta p2 = .01$. Mock jurors were more likely to hold positive perceptions of the defendant when the crime was non-personal ($M = 74.15$, $SD = 23.48$) compared to a personal crime ($M = 78.25$, $SD = 21.53$). However, there also was a significant interaction between familiarity and the nature of the crime, $F(2, 533) = 4.91$, $p = .008$, $\eta p2 = .02$. Follow-up tests revealed that mock jurors were more likely to hold positive perceptions of the defendant when he was personally familiar with the witness and the crime was non-personal ($M = 71.08$, $SD = 26.54$) compared to personal ($M = 81.15$, $SD = 19.52$), $t(177) = -2.91$, $p = .004$. Additionally, mock jurors were more likely to hold positive perceptions of the defendant when he was casually familiar with the witness and the crime was non-personal ($M = 73.61$, $SD = 20.93$) compared to personal ($M = 79.94$, $SD = 18.87$), $t(179) = -2.14$, $p = .03$. No other effects were significant.

Perceptions of the Victim-Witness

Mock jurors were asked how accurate they believed the eyewitness' identification of the defendant to be. An ANOVA was conducted to examine whether any of the independent variables influenced mock jurors' perceptions. There was a significant main effect of type of crime on mock jurors' perception, $F(1, 543) = 25.87$, $p < .001$, $\eta p2 = .05$. Mock jurors were more likely to believe the identification was accurate when the crime was an abduction ($M = 74.53$, $SD = 22.22$) compared to a theft ($M = 64.36$, $SD = 26.41$). However,

this may be overshadowed by a significant interaction between familiarity and type of crime, $F(2, 543) = 4.62$, $p = .01$, $\eta p2 = .02$. When the defendant was personally familiar, and the crime was abduction, mock jurors were more likely to believe the identification was accurate ($M = 80.45$, $SD = 20.33$) compared to when the crime was a theft ($M = 63.55$, $SD = 28.35$), $t(183) = -4.69$, $p < .001$. Additionally, when the defendant was casually familiar to the witness and the crime was an abduction, mock jurors were more likely to believe the identification was accurate ($M = 75.64$, $SD = 19.49$) compared to when the crime was a theft ($M = 63.97$, $SD = 23.80$), $t(181) = -3.63$, $p < .001$. No other effects were significant.

DISCUSSION

Various extralegal factors can influence jurors' decisions when eyewitness identification is the sole form of evidence. It is important to understand how different factors may influence jurors' perceptions of an eyewitness and his or her testimony, as eyewitness testimony is highly persuasive to jurors (Brewer & Wells, 2011). The current study examined two under-studied variables in juror decision-making research: nature of the crime and the eyewitness' familiarity with the defendant. It is imperative researchers examine the different contexts in which a person may become an eyewitness to a crime as well as whether they have any prior relationship with the defendant given that familiarity is prevalent in criminal cases (Flowe et al., 2011; Gross et al., 2005). Eyewitness age has been extensively studied but very few researchers have examined how eyewitness age may interact with familiarity with the defendant and the nature of the crime to influence jurors' judgments.

Defendant Guilt

The current study conceptualized guilt in two ways: dichotomous (guilty vs. not guilty) and subjective guilt on a continuum. While subjective guilt ratings are not used in the courtroom, assessing guilt on a continuous scale allows us to examine jurors' perceptions of the variables in relation to the defendant. The current study yielded no effects of familiarity, eyewitness age, or nature of crime on jurors' dichotomous verdicts. These results support other research in the field that has not found an influence of familiarity (e.g., Pozzulo et al., 2014) or eyewitness age (e.g., Golding, Sanchez & Sego, 1997; McCauley & Parker, 2001) on dichotomous verdicts.

However, both the age of the eyewitness and the nature of the crime were influential in jurors' subjective guilt ratings. Interestingly, the 15-year-old eyewitness elicited higher guilt ratings in comparison to the 10-year-old eyewitness but elicited comparable guilt ratings to the five-year-old. This suggests that mock jurors may have trusted testimony provided by an adolescent more-so than testimony provided by an older child, perhaps due to cognitive abilities; moreover, they may perceive a child's testimony as more honest than a ten-year-old's which is why it produced comparable ratings to the 15-year-old (Goodman, Golding, & Haith, 1984). The ten-year-old eyewitness may have been right on the cusp of a lack of honesty, but also a lack of cognitive abilities.

We also found that jurors were swayed by the nature of the crime. Specifically, jurors were more likely to assign higher guilt ratings when the crime was personal in nature

(i.e., an abduction) compared to non-personal (i.e., theft). This is consistent with research suggesting that crimes against a person are considered to be more serious – and may likely lead to a guilty verdict (or, increased perceptions of guilt). It appears as though jurors do, in fact, take the nature of the crime into account when considering the evidence. This is one of the first studies, to our knowledge, that has found the type of crime to influence jurors' guilt ratings as previous research examined sentencing decisions (e.g., McCauley & Parker, 2001; Walker & Woody, 2011) or found no effect (e.g., Pozzulo et al., 2011). Perhaps the fact that the crime was personal and there was time shared between the eyewitness and defendant was enough to suggest to jurors that the eyewitness would have been able to make an accurate identification.

Given that there was an interaction between the type of crime and familiarity, these results must also be interpreted in that context. Jurors were more likely to assign higher guilt ratings to the defendant when the defendant was personally familiar to the witness and the crime was personal compared to non-personal. This finding suggests that mock jurors may be more confident in the evidence provided by the witness when they are familiar with the defendant, and arguably, may believe that a person would be more likely to remember the perpetrator when he or she is personally victimized as the crime is personal, opposed to focusing on the time spent together. Again, given that the time spent together would be more in the abduction scenario as opposed to theft, jurors may have believed that the eyewitness would be more accurate in the identification when she was highly familiar with the person who abducted her. Child eyewitnesses are sometimes viewed as less credible than adult eyewitnesses; the results of the current study suggest that it may be possible that being familiar with a defendant will increase their perceived credibility, also seen in Sheahan and colleagues (2017).

The current study did not find significant interactions amongst the casually familiar or stranger conditions and the type of crime. As the operationalization of familiarity is still fairly ambiguous in the literature, it is possible that the relationships provided in the transcripts were unable to distinguish distinct differences amongst the two categories. For example, it could be argued that a relationship with a pizza delivery guy is more kin to a stranger relationship as opposed to a casually familiar relationship.

Contrary to hypotheses, eyewitness age did not interact with crime type or familiarity to influence jurors. The Story Model (Pennington & Hastie, 1986; 1993) suggests that jurors process the evidence and construct a story to fit the evidence and reach a decision by matching the story with the most appropriate verdict. Based on new evidence being introduced, it is assumed that jurors create many stories over the course of a trial. However, three criteria must be present in order for a story fit the verdict. The story must be able to account for the evidence, be logical, and unique such that the confidence for the specific story is higher than the alternative stories (Pennington & Hastie, 1993). Given that the current study found an interaction between the nature of the crime and familiarity, it is possible that these two factors were more important in the mock jurors' narratives of what occurred that the age of the child was less important and did not add to their internal narratives. Jurors in the current study may have believed that it is logical that a familiar

individual would be more likely to be accurately identified when the crime against them was personal, thus this narrative accounts for the evidence and mock jurors may have been more confident in the uniqueness of this story compared to other narratives they may have developed. Furthermore, mock jurors may be more likely to trust familiar-witnesses when the crime is personal, negating the issues generally seen with child witnesses.

Perceptions of the Defendant and Eyewitness

Crime type influenced both perceptions of the defendant and perceptions of the eyewitness such that when the crime was personal in nature, the defendant was perceived more negatively, and the witness more positively, compared to when the crime was non-personal. These results support previous research where crime against a person results in more negative perceptions compared to crimes against property (e.g., Sanderson et al., 2000). This study also found that mock jurors perceived the defendant more positively in the personally and casually familiar conditions when the crime was non-personal, compared to personal. This could be due to the fact that people may be more accepting of crimes that are non-personal as they can be related to economic hardship. Jurors may be more lenient and forgiving for those individuals that are familiar to the eyewitness if the crime does not hurt anyone.

Familiarity and crime type, combined, also influenced jurors' perceptions of the eyewitness' identification accuracy. When the witness shared some sort of familiarity with the defendant (i.e., pizza delivery guy or teacher), and the crime was abduction, jurors were more likely to believe that the identification was accurate. These results suggest that the more exposure that an eyewitness has to a perpetrator, jurors may believe that the identification is more accurate. While previous research has shown that exposure duration (Lindsay et al., 1986) nor number of exposures (Pozzulo et al., 2014) influence jurors' judgments, perhaps the nature of the exposure is the influential factor. Additionally, this may be enhanced when the eyewitness reports being familiar with the perpetrator. Future research may want to examine familiarity in terms of the nature of the exposure to see whether this is influential.

Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations deserve comment. First, the use of an undergraduate sample rather than a community sample of jury-eligible individuals may impact the external and construct validity of the study (Keller & Wiener, 2011). While a university sample may generate problems relating to generalizability, Bornstein and colleagues (2017) suggest that results from this sample can still be useful. However, to ensure generalizability, future research could use a more representative, community sample of the population. Second, this study utilized mock jurors rather than a full jury. Using mock jurors does not allow for jury deliberations and it has been argued that the use of a full jury allows for better understanding of the evidence because jurors can discuss any areas of confusion (Diamond, 1997). However, as one of the goals of the current study was to provide an initial investigation of the role of familiarity and the type of crime committed, it is important to understand the decisions made by individual jurors. The next step in this line of research would be to use a full jury and allow for group deliberations.

Finally, as previously mentioned, the operationalization of familiarity is still flexible within the juror decision-making literature. As no concrete operationalization has been determined, it is possible that some of the levels of familiarity used in this study were unable to elicit the sense of familiarity that the researchers intended and as a result, it is possible that that influenced the outcome. Future research could more distinctly identify the type of relationship and thus the level of familiarity to ensure participants have a clear picture of the relationship between victim and perpetrator.

Conclusions

The current study adds to the scarce literature concerning how potential jurors may respond to different factors surrounding an eyewitness' testimony. The results of the current study suggest that an eyewitness' familiarity with the defendant and the nature of the crime can interact to influence how jurors perceive an eyewitness' testimony, in favor of the eyewitness. Given that children may witness an act of violence in their lifetime, it is important to understand how eyewitness age, and other extralegal factors, may influence jurors across various cases and circumstances (Devine, 2012). Future research may want to vary the crime type in addition to abduction and theft to determine whether familiarity still enhances jurors' perceptions of the eyewitness.

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