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Mock Jurors' Recommended Sentences for Perpetrators who have Traumatic Experiences

Katherine West
katherine.west@sfasu.edu

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MOCK JURORS' RECOMMENDED SENTENCES FOR PERPETRATORS WHO HAVE TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES

By

KATHERINE B. WEST, Bachelor of Science

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KATHERINE B. WEST, Bachelor of Science

APPROVED:

Sylvia Middlebrook, Ph.D., Thesis Co-Director

James Schaeffer, Ph.D., Thesis Co-Director

Scott Drury, Ph.D., Committee Member

George Day, Ph.D., Committee Member

Freddie Avant, Ph.D.
Interim Dean of Research and Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

Experiencing trauma can result in neurological and biological changes, precipitating long-term damage to the brain and body. A considerable proportion of incarcerated persons have reported that they have experienced some type of trauma (Stensrud, Gilbride, & Bruinekool, 2018). Using scenarios of hypothetical crimes of varying degrees of seriousness, this study explores whether disclosure of the perpetrator's traumatic childhood experiences has an influence on the severity of the sentence that mock jurors would recommend for that perpetrator. The mock jurors' trait empathy, Belief in a Just World, and their own traumatic experiences were assessed to determine whether these characteristics could account for the variation in recommended sentences. No significant differences were found between the recommended sentences of perpetrators who experienced trauma and perpetrators who did not. However, participants' optional, digitally written explanations of their rationale provided more insight into these dynamics and inspires opportunities for future research.

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Introduction

Humans have a natural tendency to empathize and try to understand or rationalize the choices that other humans make. Just World Theory (Lerner, 1980) describes this phenomenon and explains that people believe, to varying extents, that the world is a just place and most people get what is rightfully deserved. Even when presented with a situation that may discredit this belief, many people will try to rationalize the discrepancies between that situation and their Just World belief. Such rationalizations can even be used when considering how to respond to acts of violent crime. One rationalization that has been widely referenced in popular culture is whether the perpetrator of violence had experienced some sort of trauma as a child. For example, in the prequels of the popular movie franchise *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1999) and in the hit series *Dexter* (Gussis, 2006), the protagonists watched their mother die at a young age and eventually went on to commit several violent acts as adults. Both of these stories show characters who have had traumatic childhood experiences, aiming to evoke empathy for the perpetrator in the process, which prompts the audience to try to understand why a person would commit violence, and then use that experience as the rationalization. The popularity of these fictional characters and their stories may reflect a widespread acceptance or rationalization of violent perpetrators with a history of traumatic experiences, especially if they experience the trauma as children. Legal and psychological research into this relationship and its effects is actively being explored, and the purpose of this study is to contribute to that body of literature.

Objectives

Currently, having experienced trauma as a child can be disclosed within a presentencing report for consideration when determining an offender's sentence in the criminal justice system. However, there is insufficient research regarding whether knowledge of a perpetrator's traumatic childhood experiences influences the degree of responsibility a juror would attribute to the perpetrator. This study aims to explore whether a perpetrator's traumatic childhood experiences affect jurors' perceptions of perpetrator and their actions, the extent to which the traumatic experiences are used to understand or rationalize a violent crime, and if that rationalization influences the subsequent consequences assigned in a criminal court. Specifically, this study aimed to analyze which personal characteristics and experiences of the juror may contribute to their reasoning.

Literature Review

Existing research explains what trauma is, the neurobiological effects of experiencing trauma, how these effects relate to criminogenic behaviors, which characteristic of jurors contribute to their perception of a crime, and how these factors are all related.

Defining Trauma

Trauma can be defined as an emotional experience that significantly overwhelms an individual's ability to cope, resulting from events that pose a substantial threat to or harm of life, bodily integrity, or sanity (Sperry, 2016). Most of the existing research on traumatic experiences focuses on the experiences of combat veterans, first responders, and sexual assault survivors. However, the field understands there is vast variability of what can be considered traumatic. Trauma can result from natural disasters, such as hurricanes or tornadoes, or can be human-induced, as with motor vehicle accidents, assaults, terroristic attacks, and acts of war (Sperry, 2016). The CDC created the 10-item Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) inventory for assessing childhood trauma, which includes growing up with a family member that was verbally or physically abusive, that struggles with mental illness, uses drugs, was negligent, had divorced parents, or an incarcerated parent (Felitti et al., 1998). It should also be noted that substantial variations have been observed in individuals' response to trauma; what may be traumatic for one individual may cause minimal life disruption for another.

The Neurobiology of Trauma

When the body experiences stressful events, sympathetic arousal activates the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis to instantly prepare the body for its immediate response: fight-or-flight (or freeze; Sperry, 2016). During sympathetic arousal, the adrenal glands release norepinephrine- a stress hormone which increases the heart rate, blood flow, and breathing rate. The adrenal glands also release cortisol, which plays a role in metabolism, glucose and insulin levels, and immune system responses. With these physiological responses, the body is prepared to react to threats of danger instantly and effectively.

However, the experience of significant trauma can result in ongoing, overactivation of the body's stress response. The prolonged activation of the stress response can result in lasting damage to various parts of the brain, including the amygdala, hippocampus, and the frontal cortex (Sperry, 2016). First, the amygdala initiates the stress response and plays a primary role in fear and emotional conditioning. Overactivation of the stress response can cause the amygdala to be easily activated, which may be why those that have experienced trauma have an exaggerated startle response. Similarly, the frontal cortex of the brain is often associated with complex thoughts, including reasoning and decision-making. Overactivation of the stress response is related to decreased volume of the frontal cortex, which may be why those that have reportedly experienced trauma often experience difficulty reasoning and making

decisions. Additionally, the hippocampus is associated with episodic memory. Damage to the hippocampus may result in memory impairments, which can be observed in people that have reported traumatic experiences (Bremner, et al., 1995; Herzog & Schmahl, 2018; Sperry, 2016). These physiological effects of an overactivated stress response help explain why and how considerable changes in cognition and behavior can be frequently observed in people with traumatic experiences.

Long-Term Effects of Trauma

The physiological changes associated with experiencing trauma can have a lifelong impact on one's physical health and mental wellbeing, which can result in considerable social, emotional, behavioral, and interpersonal impairments. In 1998, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) observed a strong relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and chronic illnesses, such as heart disease, lung disease, liver disease, obesity, diabetes, some types of cancer, and even an overall lower life expectancy (Felitti et al., 1998). Since then, the body of research on the effects of trauma has corroborated significant relationships between a history of ACEs and an increased likelihood of chronic health problems and early death (Monnat, & Chandler, 2015; Sperry, 2016). Traumatic experiences have also been found to be strongly associated with a variety of mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), borderline personality disorder, dissociative identity disorder, a variety of psychotic symptoms, as well as an increased risk of substance abuse and suicidal

behavior (Herzog & Schmahl, 2018; Nierop, et al., 2014; Sperry, 2016). According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), experiencing trauma can result in externalizing angry or aggressive behaviors as well as reckless or self-destructive behavior (American Psychological Association, 2013). This may explain in part why traumatic experiences are also associated with involvement with the criminal justice system, including incarceration.

Trauma and Crime

A prominent percentage of inmates have reported traumatic experiences. According to The Department of Justice, inmates that had been diagnosed with a mental health condition (which is more than half of all prison and jail inmates) were three times as likely to report being sexually or physically abused in their past (James & Glaze, 2006). Stensrud et al. (2018) found that a substantial proportion of inmates disclosed traumatic childhood experiences compared to what was reported by the general population. Other studies have found corroborating results, even when controlling for other predictive factors, including demographics, individual risk, familial risk, and personal history (Baglivio et al., 2015). In fact, with every additional adverse childhood experience, there is an increased risk of becoming a serious, violent, chronic offender (Baglivio, & Epps, 2015).

In most states, the criminal justice system offers a plea of Not Guilty by Reason of Insanity (NGRI) for individuals who “as a result of a severe mental disease or defect,

were unable to appreciate the nature and quality or the wrongfulness of his [or her] acts" or "where mental disease or defect either prevents the defendant from appreciating the wrongfulness of their conduct" (Hiromoto, 2020, pp. 46-47). Some legal experts argue that the physical and psychological effects of traumatic experiences are comparable to that of the criteria for the insanity plea, citing how the neurobiological effects of trauma can diminish the capacity for individuals to make responsible or rational choices.

While defense attorneys may be able to make a good argument for this based on the existing research, the decision regarding the appropriate consequences for an alleged perpetrator of a violent crime who has experienced trauma is ultimately in the hands of average American people- a jury of their peers. Although there seems to be some degree of empathy and justification towards popular fictional characters, the extent to which people would attribute empathy and justification towards real-life scenarios is relatively unclear. Based on previous research, it can be hypothesized that participants will attribute lower sentences to perpetrators who have experienced childhood trauma (Hypothesis 1).

Mock Juror Childhood Trauma

Mock jurors' own traumatic experiences may influence their perception of a perpetrator. Jones et al. (2020) found that mock jurors who had experienced abuse were more empathic towards the victim in a child abuse case than those who had not experienced abuse. It is unclear how mock jurors that have experienced trauma will evaluate a perpetrator of violent crime. Based on the findings from Jones et al. (2020), it

can be hypothesized that participants of this study with traumatic experiences will be less empathic towards defendants, and therefore will recommend more severe sentences (Hypothesis 2).

Mock Juror Empathy

The dispositional empathy of a mock jury participant is one notable factor that can impact the outcome for a defendant. Wood et al. (2014) found that participants with high trait empathy believed that the defendant was less responsible for the alleged offense. Based on these results, it can be hypothesized that mock jurors with high empathy will give shorter sentences to perpetrators (Hypothesis 4). Additionally, Peterson and Silver (2017) found that information about the perpetrator's traumatic background also significantly predicted empathy towards the perpetrator. Based on these results, it can be hypothesized that mock jurors with high empathy will give lower sentences to perpetrators. However, Jones et al. (2020) found that mock jurors who had experienced abuse were more empathic towards the victim in a child abuse case than those who had not experienced abuse. It is unclear how mock jurors that have experienced trauma will evaluate a perpetrator of violent crime. Based on the findings from Jones et al. (2020) as well as Peterson and Silver (2017), an interaction between these two variables is hypothesized. Specifically, that participants that have experienced trauma will assign low sentences to perpetrators that have childhood trauma, and severe sentences to perpetrators that do not. Meanwhile, participants that do not have childhood

trauma were hypothesized to give moderate sentences to perpetrators that have experienced trauma and somewhat long sentences to perpetrators that did not experience childhood trauma (Hypothesis 3).

Mock Juror Belief in a Just World

The extent to which a mock jury participant believes that the world is just is another notable factor that can potentially impact the outcome for a defendant. Once again, Just World Theory (Lerner, 1980) describes how one may view the world as a place in which people get what is deserved. This characteristic is called "Belief in a Just World" (BJW) As the result of this belief, some may try to rationalize an instance of injustice by believing that the victim is in some way responsible for their experience. The literature has consistently supported victim-blame as a mechanism to rationalize one's BJW across a variety of contexts, including for victims of AIDS, robbery, discrimination, and cancer (O'Quin & Vogler 1989; Stroebe et al., 2015). Generally, most of the literature regarding the BJW construct analyzes gender differences, cultural differences, other personal attitudes and how that belief relates to perceptions of sexual assault cases. Specifically, research has consistently supported that Belief in a Just World is strongly related to victim blame in sexual assault cases (Landström et al., 2016; Strömwall et al., 2013; Thomas, 2018). Research addressing how a mock juror's belief in a just world may influence their perception of perpetrators for other types of crime, and whether a perpetrators trauma history acts as a mitigating factor in this rationalization process, still

requires further exploration. Based on a pattern of strong Belief in a Just World being related to justifying a crime, it can be hypothesized that participants with high Belief in a Just World will try to justify the crime by giving shorter sentences to perpetrators who have experienced trauma.

These characteristics of mock jurors have been documented as having an effect on their perceptions of defendants in other studies and cases in various contexts. This study aims to analyze a network of variables in cases of violent crime to better understand the extent to which people might rationalize, and at least attempt to justify, the actions of a violent defendant and why.

Justification, Significance, and Contribution

Research has shown that traumatic childhood experiences result in neurobiological and behavioral changes, as well as an increased likelihood of incarceration. This research contributes to a growing conversation about the extent to which perpetrators of violence, with histories of traumatic experiences, can face culpability for their actions. However, the extent to which people are empathetic and understanding towards a defendant with traumatic experiences, and if that perception influences the outcome in the criminal justice system, requires further exploration.

Due to the critical role that perceptions from people play in determining trial outcomes, it is important to study peoples' perceptions of the alleged perpetrator. Specifically, it is important to study whether peoples' interpretations of the alleged perpetrator's childhood trauma are considered potential mitigating factors against strict sentences. Because this study will be analyzing the perceptions of appropriate outcomes for defendants on trial, the participants assume the role of a mock juror and asked for their interpretation of what would be the appropriate outcomes for defendants on trial. Although information about this relationship may also be obtained by analyzing public court records, most research regarding criminality is based on data about inmates or from court records (Mosher et al., 2010). In a controlled setting, there is an opportunity to

evaluate more specifically the extent to which character and situational variables can account for the granular differences in court case outcomes.

It was speculated that certain personal characteristics of mock jurors may be best able to account for differences in their decision-making processes regarding appropriate outcomes. The personal characteristics that are anticipated to have a direct influence on this perception are the mock jurors' trait empathy, their belief in a just world, and whether they have traumatic experiences of their own.

Methods

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited from two separate locations and platforms. The first group from which participants were recruited was General Psychology classes at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas. These students were offered the incentive of general class credit as compensation. Students in these courses had access to an online library of psychological studies currently being conducted at the University through a cloud-based research software program, in which students could select which studies they choose to participate in. General Psychology classes required students to accumulate 10 research points (1 point is earned by spending one half-hour participating in research). This recruitment practice is commonly used by researchers at Stephen F. Austin State University, but this year, the number of participants recruited from General Psychology classes was insufficient. To compensate, participants were also recruited from a public Facebook post.

A Power analysis was conducted with the program G-Power, and determined that 77 participants must be recruited to effectively power the regression analysis, with a medium anticipated effect size (p=.8) and four predictor variables (α=.05).

Materials

All materials were provided virtually through Qualtrics. The online platform allows increased availability for participants to partake in the study at their convenience.

An informed consent form was used to inform the participants about the procedure and allow the participant to voluntarily decide if they choose to participate (see Appendix A and B). Participation in the study was completely voluntary, but the participants had to provide their written consent to participate before they moved on to the next steps of the study.

Vignettes were used to present information about hypothetical perpetrators of crimes (see Appendix C). Each vignette briefly described an individual and a brief summary of the facts of the violent crime they were found guilty of. These vignettes included cases of stalking, aggravated assault, sexual assault, robbery, and homicide. There were two conditions of these vignettes: one with the disclosure of traumatic childhood experiences as one of the "Offender Characteristics," and the control condition in which the "Offender Characteristics" read that the offender had no history of trauma or mental illness. Participants were randomly assigned to each condition, and an equal number of participants were in each condition. The name of the defendant, type of childhood experience (whether there was childhood trauma and which type), and specific criminal allegations were the only differences between each vignette. Each participant read five vignettes from the same condition, using a between-subjects design. Questions

about the level of punishment deserved by the defendant were asked and responses were given on a sliding scale.

There were three scales from previous research that were used to assess characteristics of the participants: the Basic Empathy Scale (BES), the Global Belief in a Just World scale (GBJW) and the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) inventory.

The Basic Empathy Scale (BES; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006) was used to assess participants' levels of empathy (see Appendix D). The BES assessed both cognitive and affective components of empathy. This is a 20-item survey with Likert scale responses, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The BES has shown high construct validity and internal validity and has been cited by over 1,000 researchers.

The Global Belief in a Just World Scale (GBJW; Lipkus, 1991) was used to assess participants' thoughts on how just they believe the world to be (Appendix E). This scale is a brief, seven-item questionnaire with Likert scale responses, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (6). The GBJW scale validity has been upheld and this scale has been cited in over 600 articles.

Participants were also be asked if they have had any traumatic childhood experiences with the 10-item ACE inventory (Appendix F). Each question has only "yes-or-no" responses, and the sum of "yes' answers creates the ACE score. The ACE inventory was developed and used by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and has been strongly supported in existing research.

To gather information about the participants, a brief demographics survey was also presented after the other questionnaires to prevent order effects. Information about the participants' race, ethnicity, age, sex, and gender was obtained (see Appendix G).

Lastly, a statement which includes more detailed information about the study, contact information for the researchers, contact information for counseling services in the event of potential distress related to the content or questions, and the opportunity to learn about the results of the study upon completion, was given at the end to debrief and conclude the study (Appendix H and I).

Procedure

Upon selecting this study online, the informed consent form was initially presented to provide information about the procedures and goals to students and reminded students of the voluntary nature of participation. Participants had to provide their digital signature to begin. Participants were given brief instructions, which explained that they will be shown summaries of presentencing reports for people that were convicted of a crime and asked to use their best judgement to give appropriate sentences. The vignettes were then presented, each followed by the sliding scale used to recommend a sentence and the option to explain their reasoning. The questionnaires were presented next, in the following order: BES, GBJWS, ACE. The ACE inventory was presented last to prevent order effects. Then, the participants were presented with the demographics questionnaire. The debriefing information was presented last.

Hypotheses

Research has shown that experiencing trauma can have lasting long-term effects on health and behavior (Sperry, 2016). Therefore, it was anticipated that participants would attribute less severe sentences to perpetrators that have experienced childhood trauma (Hypothesis 1). Jones et al. (2020) found that participants who experienced trauma were more empathetic towards the victim. This suggested that participants who reported having traumatic experiences on the ACE inventory would recommend more severe punishments for perpetrators (Hypothesis 2). However, because Peterson and Silver (2017) found that a perpetrator's traumatic background influenced the empathy attributed to them, an interaction between these two variables was hypothesized. Specifically, it was anticipated that participants who reported having traumatic experiences on the ACE inventory would assign less severe sentences to perpetrators who have childhood trauma, and more severe sentences to perpetrators who have not had such trauma. Meanwhile, participants who did reported that they did not have traumatic experiences on the ACE inventory were hypothesized to give moderate sentences to perpetrators who have experienced trauma and somewhat long sentences to perpetrators that did not experience childhood trauma (Hypothesis 3). Because Wood et al. (2014) found mock jurors with high empathy attributed less responsibility to the perpetrator, it was hypothesized that mock jurors who have high BES scores will give mild sentences to perpetrators and mock jurors with low BES scores would give recommend more severe sentences (Hypothesis 4). Similarly, high scores of BJW have consistently been found to

be related to rationalizing a crime, so it was hypothesized that participants with high GBJW scores would give mild sentences to perpetrators, and participants with low GBJW scores would give more severe sentences to perpetrators (Hypothesis 5).

Model

This study used regression analyses, assessing patterns in the variables and analyzing which variables can best account for differences in the severity of sentences given to perpetrators of a crime. The predictor variables include three self-reported characteristics of the participants: how empathic they are (measured with the BES), whether they believe in a just world (measured with the GBJWS), and if they have had traumatic childhood experiences (measured with the ACE inventory), and also one variable manipulated in the vignettes: the childhood experiences of the defendant (traumatic vs. non-traumatic). The criterion variable is severity of the sentences that mock jurors recommend for the defendants in the vignettes. One regression model assessed all of these variables simultaneously in order to determine variance accounted for by each predictor while controlling for the other predictor variables. This model was used to evaluate Hypotheses 1, 2, 4, and 5. A moderated regression was used to investigate the variance specific to ACE scores, the condition group (perpetrator with trauma vs. perpetrator without trauma), and the interaction between the two. This model was used to evaluate hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 in more depth. Hypotheses 4 and 5 were also able to be assessed with correlations.

Results

Data Cleaning

A power analysis was conducted with the program G-Power and determined that 77 participants must be recruited to effectively power the regression analysis, with a medium anticipated effect size (p=.8) and four predictor variables (α=.05).

In total, there were 87 participants before data cleaning procedures commenced.

Data was assessed for missing responses and central tendencies and biases. Random missing answers in between other question answers were not observed. However, there were 14 participants that discontinued their participation less than halfway through the study- before or during the first scale. Because of the high volume of missing data, each of these 14 participants had to be removed in its entirety. After these participants were removed, 73 participants remained. Additionally, another eight participants chose not to answer some of the questions about recommended sentences, so they had to be removed as well. After these participants were removed, 65 participants remained. Although the minimum requirement for power no longer sufficed, the difference was minimal and so it was concluded that the impact would be miniscule.

Descriptive Statistics

To test the reliability of each survey, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated. There was strong internal consistency within the BES ($\alpha = .86$), and the GBJW ($\alpha = .81$), and moderate consistency within the ACE ($\alpha = .76$). Descriptive statistics were conducted, including an assessment of skewness and kurtosis. Histograms and scatter plots were created and visually inspected and appeared fairly normal. The means and standard deviations of the variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics for all measures as mean (SD).

Variable	Mean (SD)
BES	73.863 (9.197)
GBJW	2.810 (.664)
ACE	2.547 (2.334)
Sentence Severity	63.231 (12.124)

Most of the participants identified as White or Caucasian (72.6%), not Hispanic or Latino (74.0%), and female (75.3%). Only 9.6% of participants identified as Black or African American (6.8% of participants identified as more than one race), 19.2% of identified as Hispanic or Latino, and 21.9% identified as male (5.5% identified as non-binary, gender non-conforming, or preferred not to specify).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Correlations

To assess the relationships between each of the variables and the recommended sentences, a correlation was conducted using Pearson's *r*. None of the correlations were strong or significant. Therefore, this analysis fails to support Hypotheses 4 and 5. Exact values for outcomes of these assessments are available in Table 2.

Table 2.

Correlations between all the continuous variables.

	BJW	Empathy	ACE
Empathy	-.214	.	.
ACE	-.81	.012	.
Sentences	-.082	.146	.075

** $p<.05$*

Regression Analyses

A regression analysis was conducted to assess whether mock jurors' BES, GBJW, or ACE scores could explain the variability between the different sentence recommendations. The ACE, GBJWS, and BES scores, as well as the condition group (predictor variables) were entered into the regression model simultaneously to determine if any of these variables could predict the recommended sentences (outcome variable)

while controlling for all of the other predictors. This produced an R^2 value of .049, meaning that the model only accounted for 4.9% of the variance in the recommended sentences, and was not significant (p=.547).

None of the individual predictor variables yielded significant results either, as shown in Table 3. Therefore, these results fail to support Hypotheses 1, 2, 4, and 5.

Table 3.

Regression Results for each predictor variable with the outcome variable.

Variable	b	SE	p
Group	3.455	3.100	.270
ACE	.381	.662	.567
BJW	-1.420	2.830	.618
Empathy	.155	.180	.391

A moderated regression analysis was used to test hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 using an SPSS extension called Process. This model assessed the predictor variables ACE scores, the condition group variable (perpetrator with trauma v. perpetrator without trauma), and the interactions between the condition group and ACE scores with the criterion variable (recommended sentences). These variables were not reliably predictive of sentencing recommendations, as shown in Table 4 and Figure 1. Therefore, these results fail to support Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3.

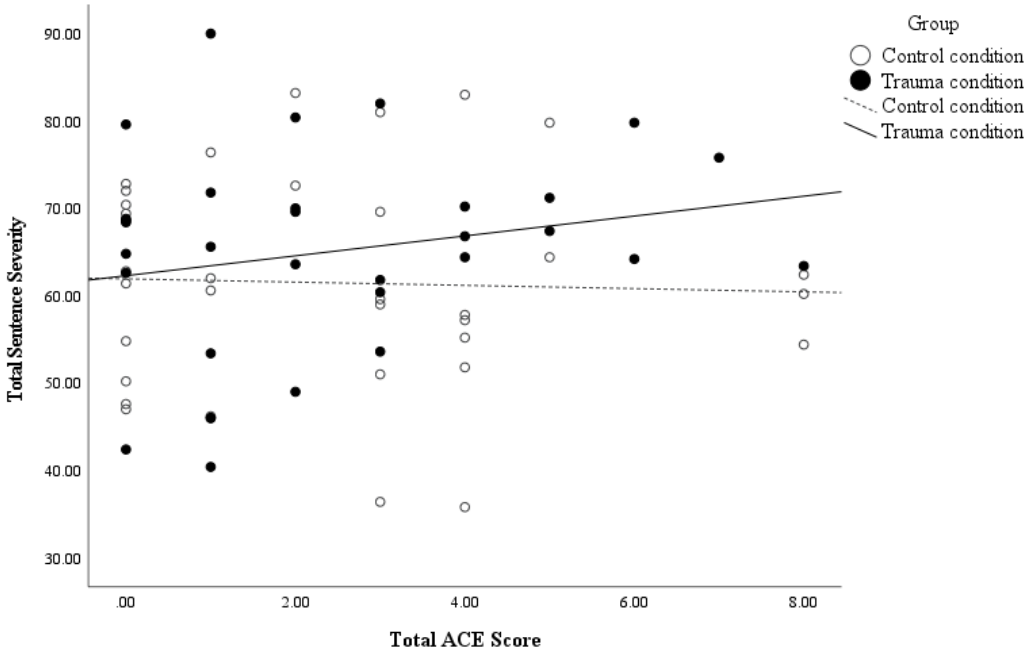
Table 4.

Individual moderated regression results for each variable.

Predictor	b	SE	p
Group	3.660	3.012	.229
ACE	-.186	.880	.833
Group x ACE	1.324	1.312	.3168

Figure 1.

The Interaction between Total ACE Score and Group for Sentence Severity.



Qualitative Review

Participants were given the option to explain their rationale for their decision after each question about the sentencing recommendations, which provided some insight into these relationships.

The variability of the responses to the relationship between trauma and crime ranged from completely disregarding that information to considering it very seriously. Some samples of participants' rationales include the following: “Just because Jordan has experienced domestic violence as a child that does not give him the right to choose violence,” or “No matter the experience/trauma, no one should get away with physically assaulting someone.” Others strongly considered the disclosure of trauma in their recommendation by arguing that, “There can be alternatives to work on his traumas and behaviors,” or, “He caused violence and was not thinking straight. He should get help from counseling.” The same degree of variability was observed among participants who reported experiencing trauma. Some were especially critical of the offender, arguing that “No matter what you have been through or seen doesn't mean you can harm others. I would know I have been traumatized and realized I don't want anyone to go through what I went through.” However, others were reportedly more understanding due to sharing a similar past experience and disclosed that they “understand [the offender’s] pain.” Once again, this variability was not able to be explained by the participants’ traumatic experiences, empathy, or belief in a just world.

Restorative Practices and Mental Health Care

While there were no significant quantitative differences between the different conditions, there was one noticeable difference in the written rationales for their recommended sentences. Between the two conditions, a number of participants recommended some sort of mental health treatment as an alternative for or in addition to jail time for offenders in the trauma condition. Yet very few participants in the control group recommended mental health treatment in the rationale for their sentencing recommendations.

Controversial Crimes

Based on the optional comments about the reasoning for the sentence recommendations alone, the perspectives on the vignettes of sexual violence (involving male perpetrators and female victims) in particular were divided and polarized. For the stalking vignette, a substantial proportion of responses were quite lenient and forgiving, while others thought that the behavior was completely unacceptable. Some participants argued that "There is no physical or hard proof against him. […] It is all circumstantial," or, "As Chris does not have any criminal history, this whole situation could be a misunderstanding." or, "He did nothing to harm her in any way. He only made her feel uncomfortable." While others strongly asserted that, "Chris should be held accountable for his actions that made Laura feel uncomfortable and unsafe. The bottom line is that his stalking is not okay, and Laura's declining of his offer was plenty of an answer that Chris

should have left her alone and respected her," or, explained that "I have seen a lot of people stalk and eventually commit a crime on the news. That woman could've eventually been hurt if he is dealing with being traumatized. I think he needs help before he hurts someone." Once again, the differences in these perspectives were not accounted for by whether the offender reportedly experienced trauma.

The polarization of the responses was even more extreme for the cases of sexual assault. There were a few participants who downplayed the scenario or gave the benefit of the doubt to the offender. Some participants asserted that "I believe that people are responsible for their actions when they drink. She should not have accepted his drinks," while another said, "I did not choose a sentence because I need more information about the incident. Both individuals were most likely drunk and [it] may be a case of regret." Another simply stated, "There is no evidence!!!" On the other hand, there were also a notable number of participants who strongly recommended extremely severe sentences. Quite a few participants stood firm in their convictions that "Consent is key. Period," and argued "If you sexually assault someone you must do real time, making you never even think about possibly doing that again." Two participants actually recommended the death penalty for this crime, stating: "He raped her. Death penalty," and "Sexual assault should be punishable by execution, not only for the safety of the public but because that type of evil can't be fixed and should be extinguished." The responses to the sexual assault case seem to be the most polarized and extreme of all the scenarios.

This written feedback prompted an exploratory analysis to determine whether participants' biological sex could account for the variation in recommended sentences in the cases of sexual violence. Two regression analyses were conducted, in which participants' sex and group condition were predictor variables and the recommended sentences for each the sexual assault and stalking cases. However, no significant relationships between sex and the sentence recommendations for the stalking case (R^2 = .078) or the sexual assault case (R^2 = .083) were observed.

Discussion

The present study assessed whether mock jurors' scores on the BES, GBJWS, or ACE inventory could predict variance between participants' sentences for offenders who were found guilty of various crimes involving different degrees of aggression and violence. The results did not support that the differences in recommended sentences could be accounted for by any of these factors. However, the lack of statistical support for these relationships still brings forward interesting considerations and implications.

The written rationales for the participants' sentencing decisions provided interesting insight into the results. Specifically, there were opposing arguments for each scenario and condition. None of the selected variables explained the relationships between these variables, conditions, and outcomes. It is likely that a distinct trend could not be strongly supported by the data due to variability within each of the predictive factors and in each of the scenarios. Even when assessing each of the scenarios individually, in addition to the average sentences across all five vignettes, the variance was not significantly accounted for. Perhaps each independent and dependent variable is simply sufficiently subjective that explanations of the differences are not something that can be mathematically explained with this small of a sample size. Or it may imply that human nature and moral reasoning are far more complex than what can be accounted for by these factors.

Opposing arguments were found in each condition, even and especially for the main hypothesized relationship of a perpetrator's trauma and sentencing. Previous research on the effects of trauma continuously upholds lifelong effects on the brain, body, behavior, and overall mental and physical health (Felitti et al., 1998; Sperry, 2016). These effects have even been recognized and referenced by the criminal justice system, and defense attorneys have subsequently used trauma as a mitigating factor in cases (Hiromoto, 2020). There were many participants that did consider trauma to be a mitigating factor and explained that they recommended mental health treatment instead of or in addition to jail time. Still, a substantial proportion of participants argued or insisted that a person's experiences should not be an excuse for their behavior. One explanation could be that many people, especially college-aged participants, may be unaware of or naïve to the extent of the effects of trauma. However, Greene and Cahill (2012) found that mock jurors who were shown evidence of various neurological conditions were significantly less likely to recommend a death sentence than mock jurors that were not shown that evidence. Similarly, Stinnett and Alquist (2022) found that participants recommended significantly lesser sentences for hypothetical perpetrators who had a brain tumor than perpetrators who did not for the same crime. This could indicate that mock jurors may be less inclined to assign moral responsibility, and therefore inclined to assign lesser sentences, to perpetrators who have some sort of physical ailment as the reason for their behavior, rather than any experience they may have had.

The stark polarization within the responses to the cases of stalking and sexual assault are especially notable. In 1997, Schutte and Hosch conducted a meta-analysis and found that women are more likely to vote to convict a perpetrator of sexual assault than men. However, the present study did not find that sex accounted for significant variation in sentencing recommendations. This may be largely explained by the limited number of male participants in this sample. Another explanation could be that we may be in the midst of a cultural shift in our response to sexual violence. In decades past, allegations of this nature have been underreported, suppressed, and overlooked. In response to awareness-raising campaigns for these issues, like #metoo and "Take Back the Night," those impacted by sexual violence have found the courage to come forward and advocate for change, including more stringent accountability and longer sentencing (Hollander, 2018). However, these cultural changes take time- which may explain why some participants readily cast doubts over these scenarios but not the others. It also seems that, in response to the slow progression of these perspective changes, some take an extreme stance in defense of these ideas.

Limitations & Future Research

While this study has provided some compelling insights, there are also limitations. Future research should recruit a larger, more diverse, less convenient sample. Additionally, the substantial variability between the content of the vignettes. Feedback on the vignettes from after the study was completed indicated that some of the vignettes

were less overt and the crime itself did not harm the victim, which are other factors that were not accounted for that could have influenced mock jurors' perceptions of the perpetrator. Based on these limitations and implications, this study has prompted more considerations for future research. For instance, future studies should aim to recruit a more diverse, less convenient sample to have more representative data and results. Future research should use cases of a similar nature and assess other possible predictive variables. Specifically, in light of recent changes in the cultural climate regarding unwanted sexual advances and/or sexual assaults, vignettes regarding sexual violence could be a study of its own right. Gender of participant (mock juror) should also be considered. Because the participants' rationales indicated they may recommend mental health treatment for perpetrators with traumatic experiences more frequently, this could be worth assessing in more depth as well.

Conclusions

The present study did not find statistical support for the notion that ACE, empathy, or BJW could account for differences in sentencing recommendations. There may be several reasons for, but regardless, these results only open more doors for future research on these dynamics. There is, though, social significance that can be pointed to in the results of the present study. Overall, this study may indicate the varying perspectives on criminal culpability, demonstrates wide variability in how moral reasoning, and provides consideration for more research on a more granular level in the future.

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(APPENDIX A)
CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Title of Project: Perceptions of Criminal Liability
IRB Approval Number: #######

Research Description
You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Katherine West. The overall purpose of this research is to observe mock jurors' recommended sentences for a defendant on trial. During this study you will be asked to read about a defendant on trial, give your analysis of an appropriate sentence, and fill out questionnaires about yourself.
The amount of time required for your participation will be about 20 minutes and you will receive credit for your general psychology class.

Risks and Benefits
There are some risks of discomfort associated with this research. You experience some degree of distress when completing some survey items. The topics referenced can be uncomfortable, and can stir memories or feelings that may cause discomfort. If you become uncomfortable or distressed, feel free to contact support services of your choosing. Contact information for these various support services is provided below. Additionally, please know that you can skip questions or discontinue your participation at any time. However, the benefit of your participation in this research is that it will contribute to the enhancement of scientific knowledge and society.

Voluntary Participation
Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this study or withdraw your consent at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or withdraw. You may skip any question that makes you uncomfortable or any question you do not wish to answer. You will be compensated for your time, even if you do not complete the study.

Privacy and Confidentiality
Your privacy is a priority. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. Please know that your responses to the survey questions are anonymous. Your name or other identifying information will not be associated with your responses. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation. This may result in the disclosure of your data as well as any other information collected by the researcher. If this were to occur, such information would only be used to determine whether the researcher conducted this study properly and adequately protected your rights as a human

participant. Importantly, any and all audits would maintain the confidentiality of any information reviewed by their office(s).

Contact Information
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study or feel that you have been harmed in any way by your participation in this research, please contact Katherine West at katherine.west@sfasu.edu, Dr. James Schaeffer at schaeffejd@sfasu.edu, or Dr. Sylvia Middlebrook at middlebrs@sfasu.edu.
If you have questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to speak with someone other than the researchers, you may contact The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) at (936) 468-6606 or the SFASU Institutional Review Board (IRB) at irb@sfasu.edu.

If participating in this study has caused you any emotional distress, here are some campus-based and community resources that may be able to assist you:

SFA Counseling Services
(Licensed counselors) Free for SFA students
Rusk Building - 3rd Floor
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
(936) 468-2401
counseling@sfasu.edu

Counseling Clinic
(Counseling Students in training) $5 for students
Human Services Bldg. 2nd Floor, Office 202
936.468.1041
Sfasu.edu/humanservices

Burke Center
(Community mental health agency)
3824 N University Dr
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m
Crisis Line: 800-392-8343

The Family Crisis Center of East Texas
(Local nonprofit for sexual violence survivors)
SFA Office located in Health Clinic – On the corner of Raguet and E College Streets
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. | Tuesday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed from noon to 1 p.m. daily
(936) 468-7233

This information will also be provided at the end of this study.

I have read this consent form and I understand the nature of this study. I understand the risks and benefits of participating, how much time it will take, and that my responses will be anonymous. I will indicate my willingness to participate in this research below:

- o Yes, I agree to participate
- o No, I do not agree to participate

(APPENDIX B)

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES
Title of Project: Mock Jurors' Recommended Punishments for Offenders
IRB Approval Number: AY 2022-2210

Research Description

You are invited to participate in a research study. The overall purpose of this research is to observe mock jurors' recommended sentences for a defendant on trial. During this study you will be asked to read about a defendant on trial, give your analysis of an appropriate sentence, and fill out questionnaires about yourself.

The amount of time required for your participation will be about 20 minutes.

Risks and Benefits

There are some risks of discomfort associated with this research. You experience some degree of distress when completing some survey items. The topics referenced can be uncomfortable and can stir memories or feelings that may cause discomfort. If you become uncomfortable or distressed, feel free to contact support services of your choosing. Contact information for these various support services is provided below. Additionally, please know that you can skip questions or discontinue your participation at any time. However, the benefit of your participation in this research is that it will contribute to the enhancement of scientific knowledge and society.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this study or withdraw your consent at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or withdraw. You may skip any question that makes you uncomfortable or any question you do not wish to answer.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Your privacy is a priority. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. Please know that your responses to the survey questions are anonymous. Your name or other identifying information will not be associated with your responses. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation. This may result in the

disclosure of your data as well as any other information collected by the researcher. If this were to occur, such information would only be used to determine whether the researcher conducted this study properly and adequately protected your rights as a human participant. Importantly, any and all audits would maintain the confidentiality of any information reviewed by their office(s).

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study or feel that you have been harmed in any way by your participation in this research, please contact Katherine West at katherine.west@sfasu.edu, Dr. James Schaeffer at schaeffejd@sfasu.edu, or Dr. Sylvia Middlebrook at middlebrs@sfasu.edu.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to speak with someone other than the researchers, you may contact The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) at (936) 468-6606 or the SFASU Institutional Review Board (IRB) at irb@sfasu.edu.

If participating in this study has caused you any emotional distress, here are some online resources that may be able to assist you:

Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741-741 for free, 24/7 crisis support

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

Trained crisis workers are available to provide free and confidential support for people in distress **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**. Your confidential and toll-free call goes to the nearest crisis center in the Lifeline national network. These centers provide crisis counseling and mental health referrals.

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Disaster Distress Helpline
The national Disaster Distress Helpline is available for anyone experiencing emotional #distress related to natural or human-caused disasters to be connected to a trained, caring counselor, 24/7/365. Call or text **1-800-985-5990** | *disasterdistress.samhsa.gov*
This information will also be provided at the end of this study. If you need assistance finding other resources that are not listed above and more conveniently available to you, please contact one of the researchers listed above.

Please indicate below if you have read this consent form and understand the nature of this study, understand the risks and benefits of participating, how much time it will take, that your responses will be anonymous, and indicate your willingness to participate in this research below. Check No or Yes:

- o Yes, I agree to participate
- o No, I do not agree to participate

(APPENDIX C)

the Vignettes

A few months ago, Chris Martin was found guilty of Stalking. Today, he has returned to court to be sentenced. Below is an overview of the Presentence Report so that you can make an informed recommendation for his sentence:

Presentence Report

The Charges: Stalking

The Offense Conduct: Laura frequently visited a local coffee shop where Chris worked, and where they met and engaged in casual talk regularly. After a few weeks, Chris decided to ask Laura on a date and Laura declined. Laura stated that she saw Chris at her place of work, at a bank, and at the grocery store at least two separate times later that same week. She reported that these sightings increased in frequency when she stopped going to the coffee shop. She also says that she saw Chris following her in traffic, and then sitting in his car outside of her house the following weekend, which is when she reported it to the police, but the suspicious character was not present when the police arrived. Laura said she is confident it was him because she recognized his tattoos. The same course of events occurred twice more, before the police were able to confront him for questioning. Witnesses testified that Laura reported seeing the man that asked her out with increasing frequency and expressed concern for her safety.

Criminal History:

Chris Martin has no criminal history.

Offender Characteristics:

Chris's defense attorney reported that Chris had witnessed intimate partner violence and had experienced domestic violence as a child, which may have influenced his difficulty navigating romantic relationships. No history of traumatic experiences or mental health problems were reported from his past.

A few months ago, Jordan Williams was found guilty of Aggravated Assault. Today, he has returned to court to be sentenced. Below is an overview of the Presentence Report so that you can make an informed recommendation for his sentence:

Presentence Report

The Charges: Aggravated Assault

The Offense Conduct: A group of friends was at a bar-be-que party on private property. Two individuals, Jordan and Taylor, were involved in a physical altercation which resulted in Taylor being stabbed twice. Witnesses testified that a verbal argument escalated into a physical fight, during which Jordan pulled out a knife and stabbed Taylor, causing serious bodily injury to him. Witnesses also testified that Jordan was the instigator of this fight.

Criminal History:

Jordan Williams has no criminal history.

Offender Characteristics:

Jordan's defense attorney reported that Jordan had witnessed intimate partner violence and had experienced domestic violence as a child, which may have influenced his reaction to a perceived threat of danger. No history of traumatic experiences or mental health problems were reported from his past.

A few months ago, Jamie Smith was found guilty of Sexual Assault. Today, he has returned to court to be sentenced. Below is an overview of the Presentence Report so that you can make an informed recommendation for his sentence:

Presentence Report

The Charges: Sexual Assault

The Offense Conduct: Jamie and Anna met at a bar, Jamie bought Anna many drinks, Jamie and Anna left the bar together at closing time, intercourse occurred later that night. A witness observed that Anna seemed “out of it" as they were leaving the bar. Others reported having overheard Jamie saying that he was looking to “get some” that night, and that he had a “cocky” attitude as he was buying repeated rounds of drinks.

Criminal History:

Jamie Smith has no criminal history.

Offender Characteristics:

The defense attorney reported that Jamie had experienced physical and emotional trauma (including neglect and abuse) as a child, which may have contributed to his misinterpretation of social cues as well as desire for attention and affection from others. No history of traumatic experiences was reported from his past.

A few months ago, Joe Wilson was found guilty of Robbery. Today, he has returned to court to be sentenced. Below is an overview of the Presentence Report so that you can make an informed recommendation for his sentence:

Presentence Report

The Charges: Robbery

The Offense Conduct: Joe walked into a gas station and told the cashier to give him all of the money in the cash register and used a gun to threaten him to comply. Security footage and testimony from the cashier both identified Joe as the robber.

Criminal History:

Joe Wilson has no criminal history.

Offender characteristics:

The defense attorney reported that Jamie had experienced physical and emotional trauma (including neglect and abuse) as a child, which may have contributed to his aggressive behaviors. No history of traumatic experiences was reported from his past.

A few months ago, Michael Jones was found guilty of Sexual Assault. Today, he has returned to court to be sentenced. Below is an overview of the Presentence Report so that you can make an informed recommendation for his sentence:

Presentence Report

The Charges: Homicide

The Offense Conduct: Michael and Ashley have been married for six years. They have recently been having trouble in their marriage because Michael must travel often for work. Michael was able to come home two days early from his work trip and intended to surprise Ashley, but when he came home that night, he saw a man (Todd) in the living room of his house and shot him three times. Witnesses testifies that Michael had been accusing Ashley of cheating and he was trying to find the other man and that things were not in a good place just before the shooting.

Criminal History:

Michael Jones has no criminal history.

Offender characteristics: Additionally, the defense attorney noted that, as a child, Jamie had experienced physical and emotional trauma (including neglect and abuse), which may have contributed to his reaction to a perceived threat of danger and/or difficulty responding appropriately in situations with social or romantic conflict. Additionally, no history of traumatic experiences was reported from his past.

Presented after each vignette

Perpetrator Punishment

Please provide your analysis of what the most appropriate outcome for the defendant should be.

1. What would you suggest his punishment be?

Slide the marker to the point on the scale that indicates the sentence you would give. (Slide to 0 if you think they are not guilty)

(Light punishment)		Moderate punishment	Severe punishment

2. Reason for your decision (optional):

_____

_____

(APPENDIX D)

BES

1. My friends' emotions don't affect me much.
2. After being with a friend who is sad about something, I usually feel sad.
3. I can understand my friend's happiness when she/he does well at something.
4. I get frightened when I watch characters in a good scary movie.
5. I get caught up in other people's feelings easily.
6. I find it hard to know when my friends are frightened.
7. I don't become sad when I see other people crying.
8. Other people's feelings don't bother me at all.
9. When someone is feeling 'down' I can usually understand how they feel.
10. I can usually work out when my friends are scared.
11. I often become sad when watching sad things on TV or in films.
12. I can often understand how people are feeling even before they tell me.
13. Seeing a person who has been angered has no effect on my feelings.
14. I can usually work out when people are cheerful.
15. I tend to feel scared when I am with friends who are afraid.
16. I can usually realize quickly when a friend is angry.
17. I often get swept up in my friends' feelings.
18. My friend's unhappiness doesn't make me feel anything.
19. I am not usually aware of my friends' feelings.
20. I have trouble figuring out when my friends are happy.

Jolliffe, D., & Farrington, D. P. (2006). Development and validation of the Basic Empathy Scale. *Journal of adolescence*, *29*(4), 589-611. - Cited by: 1511

(APPENDIX E)
GBJWS

1. I feel that most people get what they are entitled to have.
2. I feel that a person's efforts are noticed and rewarded.
3. I feel that people earn the rewards and punishments they get.
4. I feel that people who meet with misfortune have brought it on themselves.
5. I feel that people get what they deserve.
6. I feel that rewards and punishments are fairly given.
7. I basically feel that the world is a fair place.

Lipkus, I. (1991). The construction and preliminary validation of a global belief in a just world scale and the exploratory analysis of the multidimensional belief in a just world scale. Personality and Individual differences, 12(11), 1171-1178.

APPENDIX F

ACE

The following questions will ask about sensitive topics. Please remember that your answers are anonymous, meaning your identity is not associated with your answers. Supportive resources will be provided following this questionnaire if you need assistance.

When you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often
   swear at, insult, put you down, or humiliate you?
   OR act in a way that made you afraid that you would be physically hurt?
   [ ] Yes [ ] No
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often
   push, grab, shove, slap, or throw something at you?
   OR hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
   [ ] Yes [ ] No
3. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often
   Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?
   OR Attempt to or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
   [ ] Yes [ ] No
4. Did you often feel that
   No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?
   OR
   your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
   [ ] Yes [ ] No
5. Did you often feel that

You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? OR Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?

[ ] Yes [ ] No

6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?

   [ ] Yes [ ] No

7. Was your parent (or stepparent) or guardian

   Sometimes, often, or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at them?

   OR Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?

   OR Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes?

   OR Ever threatened with, or hurt by, a knife or gun?

   [ ] Yes [ ] No

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?

   [ ] Yes [ ] No

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a member of the household attempt suicide?

   [ ] Yes [ ] No

10. Did a household member go to prison?

    [ ] Yes [ ] No

Total "Yes" Answers: _____

Used by the Oklahoma Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services and the Anna Institute

(APPENDIX G)

Demographic Information

Please provide the following information:

1. Sex: Male Female
2. Gender: Man Woman Trans man/male Trans woman/female

   Genderqueer/Gender non-conforming

   Different Identity: _____ Prefer not to answer
3. Age (in years): _____
4. I would describe my ethnicity as: (Select ONE)
   1. Hispanic or Latino
   2. Not Hispanic or Latino
5. I would describe my race as: (Select ONE)
   1) Asian
   2) Black or African American
   3) Native American /Alaska Native
   4) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   5) White or Caucasian
   6) More than one race
   7) Unknown or Not reported

APPENDIX H

DEBRIEFING

Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of defendants on trial. Your contribution is greatly appreciated.

If participating in this study has caused you any emotional distress, here are some campus-based and community resources that may be able to assist you:

SFA Counseling Services
(Licensed counselors) Free for SFA students
Rusk Building - 3rd Floor
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
(936) 468-2401
counseling@sfasu.edu

Counseling Clinic
(Counseling Students in training) $5 for students Human Services Bldg. 2nd Floor, Office 202
936.468.1041
Sfasu.edu/humanservices

Burke Center
(Community mental health agency)
3824 N University Dr
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m
Crisis Line: 800-392-8343

The Family Crisis Center of East Texas
(Local nonprofit for sexual violence survivors) SFA Office located in Health Clinic – On the corner of Raguet and E College Streets
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. | Tuesday 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
Closed from noon to 1 p.m. daily
(936) 468-7233

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, feel free to contact:

Katherine West

(936) 468-4402

Katherine.west@sfasu.edu

James Schaeffer, Ph.D.

(936) 468-4402

schaefferjd@sfasu.edu

Sylvia Middlebrook, Ph.D., BCBA-D

(936) 468-4402

middlebrs@sfasu.edu

(APPENDIX I)

Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of this study was to analyze the perceptions of offenders and the most appropriate sentence. Your contribution is greatly appreciated. If participating in this study has caused you any emotional distress, here are some campus-based and community resources that may be able to assist you:

SFA Counseling Services (Licensed counselors)
Free for SFA students Rusk Building - 3rd Floor
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
(936) 468-2401
counseling@sfasu.edu

Counseling Clinic (Counseling Students in training)
$5 for students Human Services Bldg. 2nd Floor, Office 202
936.468.1041
Sfasu.edu/humanservices

Burke Center (Community mental health agency)
3824 N University Dr
Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m
Crisis Line: 800-392-8343

The Family Crisis Center of East Texas (Local nonprofit for sexual violence survivors)
SFA Office located in Health Clinic – On the corner of Raguet and E College Streets
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. | Tuesday 1 to 5 p.m.
Closed from noon to 1 p.m. daily
(936) 468-7233

If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, feel free to contact:

Katherine West
Katherine.west@sfasu.edu
(936) 468-4402

James Schaeffer, Ph.D.
schaefferjd@sfasu.edu
(936) 468-4402

Sylvia Middlebrook, Ph.D.
middlebrs@sfasu.edu
(936) 468-4402

Vita

Katherine West enrolled at Stephen F. Austin State University in August of 2016 after graduating from Atascocita High School in May of 2016. She completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology at Stephen F. Austin State University in May of 2020. Katherine continued to study Psychology at Stephen F. Austin State University in August of 2020, where she earned her Master of Arts in Psychology in August of 2022.

Permanent Address: SFA Psychology Department
1936 North Street
Nacogdoches, TX 75962

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This thesis was typed by Katherine West.