

PERCEPTIONS OF JUVENILE CONFESSIONS AS A FUNCTION OF POLICE REPORT  
AND QUESTIONING QUALITY

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the University of  
Tennessee at Chattanooga in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements of the Degree of  
Master of Science: Psychology

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga  
Chattanooga, Tennessee

May 2019

## ABSTRACT

Recent research has shown that mock jurors are sensitive to interrogation coerciveness and its relation to risk of false confessions in adults if they can see interrogation tactics used, but not if provided with a police report that omits these tactics (Kassin et al., 2017). The present study was designed to extend these findings to a juvenile confession case. The current study analyzed the effects of interrogation quality and type of evidence presented on mock jurors' perceptions of a juvenile confession. Participants (N= 602) read a case in which coerciveness (highly vs slightly), police report type (accurate vs inaccurate vs no report), and interrogation transcript presence (present vs. not present) were manipulated. Regardless of coercion level or accuracy, police report presence led to more guilty verdicts. Consistent with prior studies of adult interrogations, results indicate that reading a police report significantly diminishes mock jurors' capacity to critically analyze juvenile confessions.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

On November 19, 1991, fourteen-year old Cateresa Matthews disappeared after leaving her Dixmoor, Illinois home. After being missing for almost a month, her body was found along a path off of I-57. Forensic analysis determined that she had been sexually assaulted and suffered from a gunshot wound, resulting in her death. For over a year the case went unsolved until, on an anonymous tip, police brought in fifteen-year old Robert Lee Veal for questioning. Veal was interrogated for more than five hours in a small room in the police station without the presence of a lawyer or his parents. At the conclusion of the questioning, Veal signed a handwritten statement reading that he, along with four others teenage boys, was responsible for the rape and murder of Matthews. Within the next three days, three of the four remaining boys also confessed to the crime. Even though the four confessions contradicted one another and analysis of DNA taken from the victim's body excluded all five defendants as sources, all five boys were convicted at trial. In 2011, the convictions were overturned when DNA evidence was found to match that of violent serial offender Willie Randolph, and the Dixmoor Five were exonerated after spending fourteen years of their lives in prison for a crime they did not commit (InnocenceProject, 2017).



## **False Confessions & Police Tactics**

False confessions occur when a suspect admits guilt to the commission of a criminal act in situations in which they are innocent (Hritz, Blau, & Tomezsko, 2010). False confessions account for around twenty-five percent of wrongful convictions (InnocenceProject, 2007). Types of false confessions include voluntary, coerced compliant, and coerced-internalized (Kassin & Wrightsman, 1985; Paton et al., 2018). Voluntary false confessions occur when an individual willingly admits to a crime they know they did not commit. Voluntary confessions occur independent of any coercion. Reasons for voluntary confessions may include attempts to protect the true perpetrator as well as desire for public attention or notoriety (Gudjonsson & Pearse, 2011). Coerced-compliant confessions involve a public admission of guilt; however, the suspect maintains an internal belief of innocence (Paton et al., 2018). The final type of false confession, coerced-internalized confessions, occur when the suspect is convinced of their guilt and begin to internalize the belief that they are responsible for the crime (Paton et al., 2018).

False confessions can occur as a result of a variety of circumstances including protecting someone else, instrumental gain, or notoriety (Malloy et al., 2014). However, the most frequently cited causes are coercive police interrogation tactics (Kassin & McNall, 1991; Kelly, Miller, Redlich, & Kleinman, 2013). Police interrogators are often taught to use coercive tactics in their interrogations of suspects in order to maximize the likelihood of eliciting a confession (Drizin, Colgan, & Lassiter, 2004). The most widely used training method is the Reid technique of (Reid, 1977). This technique is designed to increase suspect anxiety in response to denials and to reduce this anxiety only in response to a confession (Perillo & Kassin, 2011). In other words, interrogators are taught to continuously increase pressure as the suspect continues to deny

accusations and resist police influence until a confession is ultimately given, at which point pressure is relieved.

The two main interrogation tactics endorsed by the Reid technique are minimization and maximization. Maximization involves an over-exaggeration of the strength of evidence and severity of the charges on the part of the interrogator (Kassin & McNall, 1991). For example, the interrogator may tell the defendant that all the evidence points to their guilt and they might as well confess. In addition, the interrogator may threaten that if the suspect does not confess, they will receive a more severe punishment. This tactic is designed so that the interrogator may assert control and authority over the suspect in order to gain compliance, and eventually a confession (Redlich, Kelly, & Miller, 2014). On the other hand, in minimization, interrogators play down the seriousness of the crime and may even provide the suspect with potential justifications for the crime. The goal of this tactic is to establish a sense of understanding between suspect and interrogator and a superficial sense of friendship (Kassin & McNall, 1991; Redlich, 2010). For example, an interrogator may say “I want you to know I understand why you did it, I think most people would’ve done the same thing in your situation”. The use of minimization tactics creates the apperception of trust between the suspect and interrogator, making the suspect more susceptible to complying with requests to confess (Paton et al., 2018). Both maximization and minimization tactics have been proven psychologically manipulative and have been linked to increased likelihood of false confessions (Kassin & McNall, 1991).

In addition to these widely known techniques, researchers have identified additional techniques often used by interrogators to elicit a confession (Paton et al., 2018; Redlich et al., 2014). For example, interrogators will use repetitive questioning to increase uncertainty in the suspect by causing the suspect to question their answers, making them more susceptible to

suggestibility (Paton et al., 2018). Redlich and colleagues (2014) described techniques including rapport building, context manipulation, emotion provocation, as well as a specific type of maximization, presentation of false evidence. In rapport building interrogators attempt to establish a superficial bond with the suspect by creating common ground, offering kindness and respect, and meeting basic needs such as food and water. Context manipulation involves the alteration of the physical space where the interrogation is taking place (such as the interrogation room) in order to maximize the chance for a successful outcome. For example, many interrogators will arrange the interrogation room so that they are in a power position and therefore better able to assert their authority (Redlich et al., 2014). This may include sitting close to the suspect and standing while the suspect is sitting. Many interrogators will also physically isolate suspects within a closed off room in the police department in an attempt to make the suspect feel detached from the outside world. In emotion provocation, interrogators attempt to either elicit or subdue negative emotions such as anger, sadness, and fear depending on the personality of the suspect. Lastly, presentation of false evidence occurs when the interrogator provides the suspect with incriminating evidence that the police in fact do not have to increase their likelihood of confessing. In their survey of retired and active police interrogators, Redlich and colleagues (2014) found that majority of police surveyed believed that confrontation (maximization) techniques were the most successful in obtaining a confession, therefore making these tactics the most readily used in actual interrogations.

American interrogations also tend to be guilt presumptive and accusatorial. Police are taught to assume the suspect they are questioning is guilty and conduct their interrogation as such. This belief can lead to extreme bias causing many interrogators to question in a manner designed to confirm already established beliefs about the suspect's guilt and elicit incriminating

statements and confessions instead of using interrogations as means to gather information about the crime (Kassin et al., 2010; Malloy et al., 2014). This fact can prove problematic as it has been directly linked to the suggestion of narratives on the part of the interrogator (Kassin et al., 2007). In other words, interrogators construct a narrative of the crime which they believe to be true and suggest pieces of this narrative to the suspect throughout the questioning. The suspect is merely asked to verify the suggested narrative, leading to contamination of the entire interrogation. Research has even shown that when confessions are inconsistent with facts of the crime, interrogators may remold a postadmission narrative to fit the statement given by the suspect (Appleby, Hasel, & Kassin, 2011).

Research has also indicated that guilt presumption can lead interrogators to conduct more high pressure, tactic filled interrogations (Kassin, Goldstein, & Savitsky, 2003). In fact, interrogators more readily use these coercive tactics when a suspect is innocent due to the denials innocent suspects present (Kassin et al., 2010). In addition, many police interrogators exhibit overconfidence in their ability to detect guilt in suspects, leading to an overall belief that only guilty suspects are interrogated (Gudjonsson & Pearse, 2011). This false belief has been linked to incorrect labeling of innocent suspects as guilty, also known as the misclassification error (Leo & Drizin, 2010). Interrogators often analyze suspects' behavior during questioning in order to confirm this belief of guilt. Behaviors such as fidgeting, picking at one's skin or clothes, and averting gaze are all labeled as guilty behaviors by interrogators; however, all of these behaviors have also been linked to innocent suspects (Keatley, Marono, & Clarke, 2018). Once a suspect is mischaracterized as guilty, they are often subjected to an adversarial, accusatory interrogation in which coercive tactics are frequently implemented (Keatley et al., 2018). If the interrogation results in a false admission of guilt, a postadmission narrative is formed in which the police

supply the innocent suspect with facts of the crime so that the confession given matches the current evidence (Leo & Davis, 2010).

Many of the tactics used by police were initially designed to be used in interrogations of adult suspects; however, research shows that they are readily used with juvenile suspects as well (Cleary & Warner, 2016; Kostelnik & Reppucci, 2009). A recent survey of experienced police interrogators (Cleary & Warner, 2016) revealed that officers use an array of manipulation techniques similarly with both adult and juvenile suspects, including presentation of evidence, rapport building, and minimizing the seriousness of the offense (minimization). Results of the survey also revealed that Reid trained officers are significantly more likely than non-Reid trained officers to use manipulative techniques with juvenile suspects. Similar research has shown that Reid trained officers are more likely to endorse presenting false evidence and minimization tactics with adolescents and children (Kostelnik & Reppucci, 2009). Reid trained officers are also less likely to agree that adolescents are more suggestible than adult suspects than non-Reid trained officers (Kostelnik & Reppucci, 2009). Research has shown that interrogative techniques are problematic with adult suspects and can lead to false confessions, however these issues are exacerbated when these techniques are used with juvenile suspects.

### **Juveniles and False Confessions**

Certain populations have been found to be more susceptible to the coercive interrogation tactics used by police (e.g., individuals with psychological/ mental disorders, intellectual impairments, and compliant personalities). However, one of the most vulnerable populations is juveniles (Bonnie & Scott, 2013; Candel, Merckelbach, Luyen, & Reyskens, 2005; Malloy et al., 2014). In fact, over the past 25 years, 38% of exonerations involving juveniles were due to false

confessions (Innocence Project, 2015). Additionally, in a 2004 review of rape and murder cases, Drizin and Leo found that juveniles were overrepresented in the false confession population, with 63% of false confession cases involving suspects under the age of 25 and 32% of that group falling under the age of 18.

Juveniles may be more likely to falsely confess to a crime than adults for many neurological, cognitive, social, and emotional reasons. Neurologically, juveniles are different from adults. They lack developed pathways within the frontal lobe causing heightened reward sensitivity and low levels of self-regulation (Cleary, 2017). Heightened reward sensitivity can cause juveniles to be more susceptible to rewards offered by police in return for confessions such as getting to go home or ending the interrogation. Further, juveniles are more likely to falsely confess in order to escape the questioning and obtain the reward of “getting home” than adults (Cleary, 2017). Low self-regulation can cause juveniles to have low impulse control, low response inhibition, and difficulty regulating emotions, all of which have been linked to increased risk of false confessions (Cleary, 2017).

Brain imaging evidence also indicates that compared to adults, juveniles lack sufficient brain maturation in decision making regions leading them to make poor, impulsive decisions related to legal situations such as interrogations (Bonnie & Scott, 2013). Juveniles also tend to lack an established sense of future orientation meaning they are unable to fully realize future consequences of present behavior such as the long terms consequences of confessing to a criminal act; therefore many may act out of short term desires including escaping the interrogation (Cleary, 2017). This lack of future orientation can also cause juveniles to perceive encounters with police to be lengthier than they actually are. Juveniles may perceive a relatively short interrogation as a lengthy one which could contribute to increased risk of false confessions

(Cleary, 2017). Overall, to avoid falsely confessing in an interrogative situation, a suspect must have the ability to resist police influence (Davis & Leo, 2012). Due to the developmental disadvantages listed above, many juveniles fundamentally lack this ability and therefore are at increased risk of falsely confessing.

Juveniles are also more susceptible to the influence of others. Socially, juveniles may be more prone to false confessions primarily because they are typically socialized to respect authority figures such as police officers and have been found to be more compliant with authority figures (Cleary, 2017; Malloy et al., 2014). Many interrogations are structured to maximize this power imbalance between suspect and interrogator. For instance, when questioning juveniles, police may stand over suspects or assert their power by using condescending language (Cleary & Warner, 2016). Juveniles are also more susceptible to social influence, especially from peers. Therefore, juveniles are more likely to confess to a crime they did not commit in order to protect a peer or when told that a peer has given police incriminating evidence against them (Malloy et al., 2014). In other words, because youth place heavier emphasis on social connections with peers, juveniles are more likely than adults to take the blame for a crime their peer committed in order to maintain their social network.

Youth also tend to lack general legal knowledge (knowledge of rights, legal consequences, etc.) leading to a greater likelihood of making poor legal decisions such as falsely confessing (Malloy et al., 2014). One area of legal knowledge in which juveniles have been found to be especially deficient is knowledge and comprehension of Miranda rights (Cleary, 2014; Goldstein, Condie, Kalbeitzner, Osman, & Geier, 2003; Zelle, Romaine, & Goldstein, 2015). Juveniles tend to misunderstand their basic rights due to lack of knowledge and comprehension of legal language used in the rights (Goldstein et al., 2003). More specifically,

Goldstein (2003) found that the most misunderstood legal terms among juveniles were “interrogation” and “consult”. These two terms are highly relevant in the suspect questioning process and therefore their misunderstanding may imply an overall misunderstanding of the questioning process. Research has also indicated that youth misunderstand their right to counsel, meaning that many youths proceed with questioning without legal counsel present, which has been directly linked to increased risk of false confessions (Goldstein et al., 2003). Youth also tend to lack an understanding of their right to silence and therefore believe that they cannot refuse to submit to police questioning and interrogations (Zelle et al., 2015).

Studies have shown that youth under the age of 15 are significantly more likely to waive their Miranda rights than adult suspects (Grisso et al., 2003; Kassin et al., 2010). This occurs, at least in part, because youth believe they should not disobey authority figures and are therefore more likely to allow police to convince them that they should waive their rights (Kassin et al., 2010). Police often attempt to obtain waivers of rights by establishing rapport with the suspect as well as increasing the perceived benefits of waiving their rights relative to the costs (Kassin & Norwick, 2004). Also, juveniles are more likely to waive their rights on the basis of avoidance of short-term negative consequences (e.g. having to wait for an attorney would delay the interrogation ending) (Grisso, 1981). Moreover, research has shown that innocent suspects waive their rights more often than guilty suspects because they believe that their innocence will become apparent to others during the interrogative process (Kassin & Norwick, 2004). For example, in a mock crime study, Kassin and Norwick (2004) found that 81% of accused but innocent suspects waived their rights, compared to just 36% of guilty suspects. This can prove detrimental in the interrogation process because as previously stated being innocent and denying leads police to



increase pressure and confrontation, therefore significantly increasing the risk of a false confession.

A juvenile's decision to waive their legal rights may also be influenced by their understanding of whether or not they are in police custody (Cleary, 2014). Police custody is generally defined as any circumstance in which an individual is deprived of their ability to freely leave police presence (*J.B.D. v. North Carolina*, 2010). This particular issue arises primarily in juvenile interrogations due to the fact that questioning of a juvenile suspect can occur in a variety of environmental contexts outside of the typical interrogation room. More specifically, juveniles may be questioned by police in their homes or even at their schools, thus leading to confusion for the suspect (Cleary, 2014).

This issue has also led to confusion on the part of interrogators regarding whether or not they are required to issue Miranda warnings in the first place. Legally, statement of Miranda rights is only required to be given in cases in which the suspect is in police custody (*J.B.D. v. North Carolina*, 2010). Questioning juveniles outside of the police station creates a gray area in which police may or may not issue Miranda warnings as they may not perceive the juvenile as in custody. As previously stated, juveniles tend to lack understanding of Miranda warnings when they are issued thus leading to increased risk of false confessions, so by failing to issue the warnings all together, police may be intensifying this problem. Children and adolescents also may not realize that they are not in custody and have the right to exit the questioning. This issue reached the Supreme Court of the United States in *J.B.D. v. North Carolina* (2010). In this case, the court determined that juveniles are fundamentally different from adults and therefore age of the suspect should be considered when determining whether the suspect is in police custody and whether or not to issue Miranda warnings (Cleary, 2014; *J.B.D. v. North Carolina*, 2010).

Despite these advances, to date, no uniform standard exists and regulations regarding giving juvenile suspects their Miranda warnings vary drastically across states (Rogers et al., 2012).

### **Perceptions of Confessions**

Despite the coercive nature of interrogations and the increased probability of false confessions in juvenile suspects, confessions are readily admitted into evidence at trials. Only confessions that are elicited through physical harm or instances in which detained suspects are not given their Miranda rights are deemed inadmissible in court (Kassin & McNall, 1991). However, psychologically coercive tactics used by police in interrogation are not routinely seen as manipulative by the court and therefore confessions elicited through these means are readily admitted and presented. This means that some confessions admitted into evidence are in fact false, which can prove detrimental to a defendant's case given the potent nature of confession evidence.

Confessions tend to be the most damaging evidence admitted in any trial (Kassin & Neumann, 1997; Kassin & Wrightsman, 1981). In fact, when asked to rank evidence in order of importance related to verdict decisions, mock jurors cited confessions more frequently than any other type of evidence including eyewitness testimony and were significantly more likely to render guilty decisions when a confession was present (Kassin & Neumann, 1997). This phenomenon occurs primarily due to the fact that people are predisposed to believe confessions (Malloy, 2014); they tend to have a hard time believing that a person would act in spite of their best interest by confessing to a crime they did not commit. Even when presented with contradictory evidence or when told the confession was coerced and later retracted, mock jurors do not adequately discount confessions (Kassin, 2012).

When confessions are presented in trial, several factors can affect how they are perceived by jurors. Research reveals that tactics used by police during interrogations can drastically influence jurors' perceptions of confessions. For instance, jurors tend to view adult confessions elicited through maximization techniques as less voluntary than those elicited through the use of minimization techniques as indicated by higher rates of guilty verdicts in minimization cases compared to maximization cases (Kassin & McNall, 1991). Mock jurors tend to perceive maximization tactics (such as confrontation and threats of harsh punishment) as coercive and more likely to lead to an involuntary confession (Blandón-Gitlin, Sperry, & Leo, 2011). However, mock jurors typically do not see minimization techniques as coercive or likely to elicit false confessions (Blandón-Gitlin et al., 2011). Despite the fact that jurors perceive some interrogation tactics as coercive, many still assert that an innocent person should be able to resist the temptation to comply, perpetuating the belief that an innocent person will not confess to a crime they did not commit (Leo & Liu, 2009). Mock jurors tend to generally agree that confessions are strong indicators of a suspect's guilt and believe that only guilty people confess (Henkel, Coffman, & Dailey, 2008).

Overall, mock jurors tend to fail to recognize psychological manipulation in police interrogations and therefore are unable to adjust verdicts to account for potentially coercive tactics used when questioning suspects and ultimately disregard false confessions (Woestehoff & Meissner, 2016). Many psychologists have accredited this finding to the fundamental attribution error, in which people emphasize dispositional, or internal, factors instead of situational factors when explaining other's behaviors (Bernhard & Miller, 2018; Ross, Amabile, & Steinmetz, 1977). Further, because many individuals believe that they would never falsely confess to a crime they did not commit, they use this same belief to evaluate others, failing to take into

account external factors that could have caused a false confession (Henkel et al., 2008; Kassin et al., 2010). Bernhard and Miller (2018) found that mock jurors found a defendant guiltier, on average, when he recanted his confession than when an eyewitness withdrew his statement. This finding indicates that defendants who claim to have falsely confessed may be judged more harshly by the jury based on the fundamental attribution error. It is important to note that these findings relate to confessions given by adult suspects.

Some researchers have suggested that due to recent public exposure of high-profile false confession cases (e.g., the case of Brendan Dassey), that jurors today may be more aware of false confessions and the risk factors that may lead to them (Woestehoff & Meissner, 2016). In order to assess this claim Mindthoff and colleagues (2018) reassessed perceptions of confessions and interrogations in a large sample of undergraduates from 11 universities and MTurk respondents. Over half of respondents (58.1%) agreed that suspects who confess are most likely guilty and, on average respondents estimated that only 30% of innocent suspects have actually falsely confessed (Mindthoff et al., 2018). However, over half of the respondents reported believing that police are likely to use manipulative interrogation tactics in order to elicit a confession. Respondents also rated many of the tactics likely to increase risk of false confession and as coercive. Taken together, these results suggest that the public's knowledge about false confessions and risk factors associated with them is increasing, however it seems that there is still general acceptance of the idea that only guilty people are likely to confess.

More recently, Kassin and colleagues (2017) examined how incident reports (police report of the questioning of a suspect) would affect mock jurors' perceptions of the interrogation and subsequently the suspect's guilt. In the first phase of their research, experienced police interviewers investigated a mock theft and interviewed two innocent suspects (each participant

was led to believe that one suspect was more suspicious than the other). After completing the questioning, police participants were required to file incident reports for each of the interrogations; these reports were then compared with audio recordings from the actual interrogations. Results showed that police participants frequently left out details of the interrogations and grossly underestimated their use of coercive tactics when questioning the suspects. For example, on average about 57% of interrogations included confrontation tactics and 60% included maximization tactics but these techniques were only reported in 22% and 16% of police reports, respectively. In other words, results indicate that police reported on average report roughly about one-fifth of the coercive tactics they use during questioning of suspects. Therefore, several coercive tactics were used during the interrogations but did not appear in the corresponding police reports.

Past research (Lamb, Orbach, Sternberg, Hershkowitz, & Horowitz, 2000; Warren & Woodall, 1999) has found similar results by showing that interviewers frequently commit errors of omission during hearsay testimony (reporting only about one-quarter of the details reported by the child) and often misrepresenting the structure of the interview; this holds true even when the interviewer takes verbatim notes during the interview. For example, the questions interviewers do include in their reports tend to be more open-ended and less leading than they actually were, and they make the child's report seem more spontaneous and less prompted than it was in reality. Similar to Lamb and colleagues' (2000) findings, Kassin et al. (2017), found that police tend to only report approximately 20% of coercive tactics used during questioning of suspects in their final reports of the questioning. Therefore, interviewer hearsay testimony appears to be an "embellished reconstruction" of the interview conducted instead of an accurate depiction of the child's actual statements (Warren, Nunez, Keeney, Buck, & Smith, 2002).

In the second phase of their study, Kassin and colleagues (2017) provided lay participants with an overview of the mock theft case and either a police incident report, a verbatim transcript of the interrogation, or an audio recording of the interrogation. Mock jurors presented with only police testimony and reports in adult interrogation cases tend to misjudge the suspect as guilty more often than mock jurors presented with transcript evidence (Kassin et al., 2017). Mock jurors who read transcripts of interrogations versus the police report also tended to view the interrogator as exerting more pressure and trying harder to obtain a confession. Therefore, research indicates that police interrogation reports can drastically affect jurors' perceptions of an innocent suspect as they may fail to provide complete and/or accurate accounts of the questioning that took place.

In addition to underreporting of their use of coercive tactics, police will often frame their questioning of suspects as "interviews" as to avoid any potential negative connotations associated with the word interrogation (Shuy, 2000). By using the word interview instead of interrogation, police can downplay the seriousness and harshness of the questioning of suspects, making the questioning process seem more innocuous than it was in reality. This could also lead jurors to misjudge an innocent suspect as guilty by causing a fundamental mischaracterization of the interrogation process.

### **Perceptions of Juvenile Confessions**

It is unknown if, as a general practice, mock jurors take the suspect's age into account when evaluating confession evidence. Overall, research seems to indicate that age of the suspect is marginally related to guilt judgements (Redlich, Quas, & Ghatti, 2008). Juvenile defendants are sometimes perceived to be more susceptible to interrogation tactics and are therefore more

likely to be believed to have falsely confessed (Redlich et al., 2008). Research has also indicated that younger juveniles are less likely to be seen as guilty compared to older juveniles (Villamarin, 2013).

The gender of the defendant has also shown to be influential in that female suspects are perceived to be more susceptible to interrogation tactics than males and therefore more likely to falsely confess (Redlich et al., 2008). However, this effect appears to be dependent on the gender of the mock juror. For example, male jurors tend to believe that female suspects are more susceptible to interrogation tactics than female jurors. Female jurors also tend to exhibit higher levels of sympathy and view interrogations as less fair and more coercive; therefore, they are more likely than male jurors to believe defendants' claims of false confessions (Redlich et al., 2008). Sympathy levels of mock jurors have also been shown to affect how they perceive suspects. For instance, mock jurors with higher sympathy levels have been shown to be less likely to vote a juvenile suspect as guilty and more likely to view children and adolescents as credible witnesses (Redlich et al., 2008).

A recent analysis of perceptions of juvenile interrogations and confessions revealed that many mock jurors do not perceive youth as a serious risk factor for false confessions (Mindthoff et al., 2018). Over 30% of respondents indicated that it was appropriate for police interrogators to employ interrogation tactics designed to be used with adult suspects with juvenile suspects under the age of 17. Additionally, around 26% of respondents stated that it was acceptable to question a juvenile under the age of 17 without the presence of a parent or guardian. Respondents also on average indicated that juvenile confessions should be admissible in court despite the suspects denied request to have a parent present during the questioning. Further, youth was rated as one of the lowest dispositional risk factors of false confessions by

respondents, on average. These findings suggest that mock jurors fail to acknowledge age as a potential risk factor of false confessions.

### **Rationale for Current Study**

False confessions pose a real threat to our justice system, accounting for a large portion of wrongful convictions in the United States. Research has repeatedly shown that juveniles are especially vulnerable to offering false confessions in interrogative situations; however, it appears that the public does not see youth as a potential risk factor for false confessions. Research is needed in order to examine processes underlying how juvenile confessions are perceived and analyzed by the public as to potentially avoid wrongful convictions of innocent juveniles.

Recent research has independently examined how questioning quality (e.g., coerciveness of the interrogation) as well as the type of evidence presented (e.g., police report or transcript excerpts of the questioning) on mock jurors' perceptions of adult confessions. Results have shown that increased coerciveness leads mock jurors to question the confession offered making them more likely to render a verdict of not guilty (Blandón-Gitlin et al., 2011). In addition, police reports, due to high frequency of errors of omission regarding coercive tactics used during questioning of the suspect, have been shown to bias mock jurors against the suspect leading to more guilty verdicts when transcript evidence is not provided (Kassin et al., 2017).

These two factors that have been shown to influence mock juror's perceptions of confessions have yet to be assessed together in the same study or using a juvenile interrogation and confession. It is important to analyze these factors with a juvenile case because of the increased risk juveniles face in the interrogative process. Gaining a better perspective of how



juvenile confessions are assessed and what factors influence these assessments will help to inform how real jurors may behave in real life cases of juvenile confessions.

### **Current Study**

Interview quality and police reports have both been shown to independently affect juror perceptions of adult suspect confessions; however, no study has yet assessed the two variables together using a juvenile suspect confession. Therefore, the current study was designed to assess potential effects of police report evidence and questioning quality on mock jurors' perceptions of juvenile interrogations and confessions. The current study also aimed to evaluate the effects of type of evidence presented on perceptions of the confession given. To achieve these aims, a 2 (questioning coerciveness: highly vs. slightly coercive) x 2 (transcript presence: transcript evidence provided vs. no transcript evidence provided) x 3 (police report condition: no report evidence provided vs. accurate report vs. inaccurate report). The current design is not fully crossed because no data were collected in cells in which participants received neither police report or transcript evidence. The reasoning for this decision includes that such data would not be ecologically valid; in a real trial, jurors would be presented with some evidence pertaining to the confession on which they could base their verdict decision. In addition, without being provided either transcript or police report evidence, participants would not have any information to use in order to answer questions asked in the perceptions questionnaire. Including participants in these conditions would have also raised ethical concerns as these participants would have been compensated the same amount as participants required to read significantly more case materials and thus spend longer participating in the study

		<u>Police Report</u>		
		Yes	No	
<u>Transcript</u>		Inaccurate	Accurate	
Yes	Highly	----	----	----
	Slightly	----	----	----
No	Highly	----	----	X
	Slightly	----	----	X

Figure 1 Visual Representation of Study Design.

I predicted main effects of police report presence, questioning quality, and interrogation transcript presence. Specific hypotheses were as follows:

- 1a) Based on Kassin et al. (2017), I hypothesized that participants who read a police report of the interrogation and confession would be more likely to find the suspect guilty compared to participants who did not read a police report.
- 1b) I also predicted that inaccurate police reports would result in more guilty verdicts as these reports omitted details of interrogation techniques used during questioning.
- 2) Participants who read excerpts of the actual interrogation transcript were expected to render more not guilty verdicts compared to participants who did not read interrogation transcript excerpts.
- 3) I predicted a main effect of questioning coerciveness so that participants who read the highly coercive interrogation transcript excerpts or police reports would

be more likely to vote the suspect as being not guilty compared to those who read the slightly coercive transcripts or reports.

I also hypothesized the following interactions between the independent variables:

4) I expected an interaction between police report and transcript so that participants who read actual interrogation transcripts would be less likely to find the suspect guilty even when police report evidence was present (i.e., transcript only or transcript with police report conditions would result in fewer guilty verdicts than report only conditions).

5) Lastly, I hypothesized that there would be an interaction between coerciveness of the questioning and police report so that the effect of police report presence and accuracy of the police report would depend on the coerciveness of the questioning. I expected that an inaccurate police report would have a stronger impact on verdict decisions when the questioning was highly coercive because it would diminish participants' ability to determine how coercive the questioning actually was.

This study aimed to add to the current body of research as well as provide practical implications for the courtroom by showing how interview quality and accuracy of police testimony and reports can interact to influence juror perceptions of juvenile confessions.

## CHAPTER II

### METHODOLOGY

#### **Participants**

Participants were recruited from two sources, Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and the SONA research management system at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, a midsized regional university in the southeastern area of the United States. A student sample was used to supplement the MTurk sample due primarily to financial constraints, given that power analysis required a large number of participants. TurkPrime was used in conjunction with MTurk in order to limit the MTurk sample to English speaking, U.S. citizens, who were eighteen years of age or older. These specific inclusion criteria were used in attempt to gain a sample that would be representative of potential jurors in the U.S. The student sample was open to all currently enrolled undergraduate and graduate students eighteen years of age or older.

Prior to participation, informed consent was obtained from each participant to ensure voluntary participation. The informed consent form allowed participants to gain a general understanding of the study's purpose and participation requirements as well as how they would be compensated and potential risks and benefits, so that individuals could make an informed decision as to whether or not to participate.

Amazon MTurk workers were compensated \$0.25 for participation with a \$0.75 bonus if they passed the attention check questions. This compensation amount was determined by analyzing the average cost of HITs (Human Intelligence Tasks) of similar length (time required

to complete the study) and participation requirements. Student participants were compensated with extra credit in their choice of participating psychology courses. The total sample collected consisted of 639 participants, 415 Amazon MTurk workers and 224 student participants.

Thirty-five participants were excluded from the sample due to incompleteness and/or attention check failures (incorrectly answering how old the suspect in the case was ( $N=7$ ) how the victim was killed ( $N=5$ ) and how the suspect knew the victim ( $N=4$ )), non-sensical open-ended answers (such as answering “good” or “yes” to the question “*Why did you find the suspect guilty/ not guilty?*” ( $N=9$ ), or random clicking in the perceptions questionnaires ( $N=1$ ) / incompleteness ( $N=3$ ), as evidenced by answering all ones, all sevens, etc. on 7-point Likert scales, across perceptions questionnaires. An additional six student participants were excluded based on prior knowledge of the false confession case used in the current study. More specifically, students who indicated having previously taken a course in Psychology and Law (a course in which the current case is discussed in depth) were excluded from further analyses as having detailed prior knowledge of the case could have significantly skewed participants’ responses and reactions to the current study. The final sample therefore consisted of 602 participants (206 student volunteers and 396 Amazon MTurk workers).

After exclusion, student participants ranged in age from 20 to 45 with a mean age of 26.80. Student participants included 181 females (87.9%) and 23 males (11.2%). Of the student participants, 81.2% identified as White/ Caucasian, 8.7% as African American, 3.4% as Asian, 3.9% as Multi-racial, 0.5% as American Indian/ Native American, and 1.9% did not identify with any of the previously listed ethnicities. The final MTurk sample consisted of 270 females (68.2%) and 126 males (31.8%) with a mean age of 43.81 (range 18 to 81). Of the MTurk participants, 82.6% identified as White/ Caucasian, 10.6% as African American, 2.5% as Asian,

1.3% as Multi-racial, 0.8% as American Indian/ Native American, 0.3% as Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander, and 1.5% did not identify with any of the previously listed ethnicities.

Combined, participants ranged in age from 18 to 81, with a mean age of 35.87. The final sample included 451 females (75.0%) and 151 males (25.0%). 82.1% of participants identified as White/ Caucasian, 10.0% as African American, 2.8% as Asian, 2.2% as Multi-racial, 0.7% as American Indian/ Native American, 0.2% as Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander, and 1.6% did not identify with any of the previously listed ethnicities. Two participants did not report a racial identity while 201 participants did not report age. These participants were not excluded from final analyses as their failure to report these demographic characteristics did not correspond with poor quality data.

## **Materials**

Materials consisted of a murder case vignette (adapted from *People v. Deskovic, 1994*), a police report of the questioning of the suspect (if provided in condition), questioning excerpts (if provided in condition), a battery of perceptions questionnaires, and a demographics questionnaire (see Appendices).

### **Murder Case Vignette**

A case vignette was used to provide participants with background information about the current case, evidence, and suspect. The vignette was based on the actual juvenile false confession case *People v. Deskovic*. In *People v. Deskovic*, 16-year-old Jeffrey Deskovic was indicted and charged with the murder of a 15-year-old classmate after falsely confessing to police during an interrogation in 1990.

The victim in this case was determined to have been raped, beaten, and strangled after being found in a park near her home in Peekskill, New York. Deskovic, a socially-isolated classmate of the victim, was made the primary suspect in the case following overly distraught behavior at the victim's funeral and subsequent obsession with solving the case, often offering potential evidence to the police. Critically, biological evidence discovered at the crime scene did not match Deskovic's DNA, however the results were presented as inconclusive and he was still pursued as the primary suspect. In January 1990, during his eighth encounter with investigators, and after six hours of questioning which included three polygraph sessions, Deskovic confessed to the murder. Deskovic later recanted his confession; however he was found guilty of first-degree rape and second-degree murder and subsequently convicted to life in prison. In 2006, the Innocence Project took on Deskovic's case, retesting DNA evidence found at the crime scene and determined the identity of the true perpetrator, ultimately exonerating Deskovic after he spent 16 years in prison (InnocenceProject, 2019).

The vignette used in the current study was based on the Deskovic case. The vignette described the murder of 15-year-old Jane Smith, whose cause of death was described as strangulation with apparent evidence of sexual assault. No biological evidence (i.e., DNA) was obtained from the crime scene, however, a piece of lined paper was found under the victim's body. The vignette goes on to describe one of Jane's classmates whom she frequently tutored in math, 16-year-old Corey Brown. Brown is described as socially isolated and overly emotional about Jane's death (i.e., being excessively distraught at her funeral) and fixated on Jane's case (often attempting to aid police with their investigation). Brown is further described as the primary suspect in the case, leading to the interrogation conducted by police (see Appendix B).

## Transcript Evidence

Two sets of questioning excerpts were manipulated for questioning coerciveness (i.e., highly vs. slightly coercive) as well as the framing of the questioning by the detective (i.e., accurate vs. inaccurate framing). The highly coercive transcripts included multiple instances of questioning techniques associated with false confessions such as minimization and maximization (seven instances each of minimization and maximization techniques). Slightly coercive transcripts included few instances of coercive interrogation techniques (four instances each of minimization and maximization techniques).

The number of coercive techniques used in each scenario are based on findings of Kassin and colleagues (2017) analysis of the frequency of tactics used during mock police interrogations. However, frequencies were altered due to the fact that the original frequencies were found in a theft case in which the interrogations lasted half an hour on average and the current study used a murder case vignette with the highly coercive interrogation lasting eight hours and the slightly coercive interrogation lasting two hours. Kassin and colleagues (2017) found that, on average, in the thirty-minute interrogations, police used two instances of maximization and two instances of minimization, therefore, for the purposes of this study, this number was increased to four instances of each tactic for the slightly coercive conditions and seven instances of each tactic for the highly coercive conditions.

Maximization tactics used include presentation of false evidence (e.g., “*We have physical evidence linking you to the crime, Corey*”), threats of harsh punishment (e.g., “*Now if you continue to make things difficult for us, your punishment will be much worse, I can guarantee that.*”), and confrontation (e.g., “*... we think you know a lot more than you’re telling us. So why don’t you tell us what you know Corey?*”). Minimization tactics used include promises of



leniency (e.g., *“You won’t be in any trouble as long as you tell the truth.”*), incentivizing a confession (e.g., *“Please tell me exactly what happened and we can be done here, you can go home.”*), and downplaying the severity of the crime (e.g., *“We don’t think you did this on purpose Corey... We think you just got carried away and made a mistake...”*). See Appendix C for the two versions of the transcripts.

### Police Reports

Police reports were manipulated for accuracy (inaccurate vs. accurate) and for coerciveness (highly vs. slightly) for a total of four reports (i.e., inaccurate, highly coercive report; inaccurate, slightly coercive report; accurate, highly coercive report; accurate, slightly coercive report). Reports were manipulated for coerciveness so that they would appropriately match the coercion level of transcript evidence provided.

Inaccurate reports were designed to not be reflective of the actual questioning; they downplayed the coercive techniques used in the questioning by containing many errors of omission and framed the questioning as an interview. Consistent with Kassin and colleagues (2017) findings, inaccurate reports reported roughly one-fifth of the coercive tactics used during questioning of the suspect (i.e., one of the eight tactics was reported for the slightly coercive questioning while three of the fourteen tactics were reported for the highly coercive questioning). Accurate reports were designed to be reflective of the actual questioning in that they discussed the questioning techniques used and framed the questioning as an interrogation (rather than interview). Although the accurate reports discussed the questioning, it is important to note that the reports were not verbatim accounts of the questioning but instead provided the overall gist of the procedure (See Appendix D).

## Perceptions Questionnaire

Following all case materials, participants were presented with a 63-item perceptions questionnaire (see Appendix E). The perceptions questionnaires used were based on those used in past studies of perceptions confessions and juvenile suspects. The perceptions questionnaire was designed to measure the participants' perceptions of the suspect's guilt, the interrogation (the manner in which the suspect was questioned), the suspect's confession, the suspect's overall understanding of their legal rights, the police report (if one was provided), police in general, as well as affective reactions toward the suspect and victim.

### *Attention Checks*

Before completing the series of perceptions questionnaires, each participant was asked to answer a series of attention/manipulation check questions in order to ensure that they had completely and accurately read all case materials. Participants were asked to recall the age of the defendant, and specific aspects of the crime (e.g., how the victim was killed, what key piece of evidence was discovered at the crime scene, and how the suspect knew the victim). They were also asked to recall details from the questioning excerpts and/ or police report (e.g., what evidence did the detectives present against the suspect and what was the suspects alibi).

### *Verdict Judgements*

Regarding verdict judgements, each participant answered two questions modeled after those by Najdowski and Bottoms (2012) and Kassin et al. (2017). Mock jurors were first asked "What is your verdict in this case? Do you find the defendant guilty or not guilty of murder?"

(*guilty or not guilty*)”. Participants were then asked whether they believed the defendant committed the crime he was charged with, “Regardless of your verdict, do you think the defendant murdered the victim in this case? (*yes or no*). In addition, each participant rated their confidence in their verdict decision on a 7-point Likert scale (1= not at all confident, 7= completely confident) (Najdowski & Bottoms, 2012). In an attempt to gain further insight into participants’ decision making, they were also asked several free-response, open-ended questions. Participants were asked to provide reasons they believed the suspect was guilty or not guilty as well as what aspects of the questioning excerpts and/ or police report were most influential in their decision-making process. Participants were also asked whether they believed the defendant should be charged as an adult or a juvenile and their reasoning behind their decision.

In addition, participants were asked to rate on a 7-point Likert scale (1= very unlikely, 7= very likely), the degree to which they believed the confession given by the suspect was false. If participants stated that they believed it was at all likely that the confession given were false, they were then asked to provide three reasons they believed the confession may have been false.

### ***Perceptions of Interrogation***

The perceptions of the interrogation questionnaire was modeled after Kassin and McNall (1991) and Villamarin (2013). On separate 7-point Likert scales participants responded to nine items related to their perceptions of the interrogation of the suspect conducted by the police. Specifically, participants were asked to rate the overall fairness and coerciveness of the questioning as well as the degree of manipulation, pressure, and aggression they believed the detectives displayed during the questioning (Villamarin, 2013). In addition, participants rated the level of sympathy displayed by the detectives as well as the appropriateness of the techniques

used by the detectives given the nature of the crime and the suspect's age. Finally, based on the materials they were presented with, participants were asked whether they would describe the questioning of the suspect as an interrogation or an interview.

### ***Perceptions of Confession***

The three item perceptions of the confession questionnaire was adapted from the perceptions of confession questionnaire used in Redlich et al. (2008) and Villamarin (2013). Using a 7-point Likert scale (with higher scores indicating more positive views of the confession) participants were asked to rate the extent to which they believed the confession given by the suspect was voluntary, believable, and accurate.

### ***Understanding of Rights***

The understanding of rights questionnaire adapted from Villamarin (2013) was designed to measure the extent to which participants believed that the suspect had an understanding of their legal rights that are pertinent to the interrogative process. Participants were asked to rate eight items, on a 7-point Likert scale (1= very unlikely, 7= very likely), how likely it was that the suspect understood his basic legal rights: right to counsel, right to remain silent, and right to end questioning at any time. They were also asked to rate how likely it was that suspect understood the consequences of confessing: that the confession could be used against him and that he may lose his freedom by confessing. In addition, participants rated how likely it was that the suspect understood the questions being asked by the detectives and that he had a choice in confessing and signing the written statement presented to him.

### ***Perceptions of Police Report***

If participants were provided with police report evidence, they were asked to rate the perceived believability and accuracy as well as the extent to which it was reflective of the actual questioning on a 7-point Likert scale (1= not at all, 7= completely. Participants also rated the extent to which reading the police report influenced their overall verdict decision (1= not at all, 7= a great deal).

### ***Affective Reactions***

Following Bottoms et al. (2003) participants also completed a three-item affective reaction questionnaire (“I feel sorry for the defendant”, “I have pity for the defendant”, and “I have sympathy for the defendant”) designed to assess emotional reactions toward the defendant (defense). An additional three items (“I have pity for the victim and her family”, “It is the detectives’ job to do whatever possible to obtain a confession”, and “I have sympathy for the police”) were added to assess affective reactions toward the victim and police (prosecution) and to provide filler items for the three highly similar items regarding sympathy for the suspect (Bottoms, Nysse-Carris, Harris, & Tyda, 2003).

### ***Perceptions of Police***

Participants completed a 6-item sub-scale from the original 34-item Police Perceptions Scale developed by Reynolds, Estrada-Reynolds, and Nunez (2018). The six items were chosen for their relevance to the content of the present study and correlation with total scale scores. All six items chosen had item-total correlations greater than .80. Each of the six items were presented as declarative statements about police behavior. Participants were then asked to rate on

a 7-point Likert scale (1= completely disagree, 7= completely agree) the extent to which they agreed/ disagreed with each statement. Statements included “Police do their best to be fair to everyone”, “Police officers treat people with respect”, “People should trust the police to help”, “I believe what police officers tell me”, “Police officers desire justice”, and “Police usually act in ways that are consistent with my ideas about what is right and wrong” (Reynolds, Estrada-Reynolds, & Nunez, 2018). This questionnaire was included in order to assess whether perceptions of police in general, rather than the specific detectives in this case, had a significant effect on verdict decision and perceptions of the questioning.

### ***Demographics Questionnaire***

Finally, participants completed a short demographics questionnaire. Participants were asked to provide their age, gender, ethnicity, political orientation, and highest level of education completed. Questions concerning participants’ prior experience with police questioning (personally or through a close friend or family member) were also included. Finally, participants were asked whether or not they believed they would ever falsely confess and the degree of sympathy they feel for juveniles who commit crimes.

### **Procedure**

Prior to the study, participants were presented with an informed consent form containing a summary/ objective of the study as well as their rights as participants. Once they had fully read the informed consent form they were asked to click “*Yes, I am over 18 and agree to participate*” to continue with the study. If participants clicked “yes” they proceeded with the study, if they clicked “no” they were exited from the study. Once they agreed to participate, participants were

first presented with the case background information (adapted from *People v. Deskovic*). The case background provided participants with information about the crime, evidence collected, and the suspect. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of the three police report conditions (inaccurate police report, accurate police report, or no police report evidence). Police reports were presented prior to transcript evidence in attempt to mirror true court proceedings in which the prosecution presents evidence first. After being randomly assigned to one of the police report conditions, participants were again randomly assigned to either the highly or slightly coercive transcript evidence conditions. Finally, participants were again randomly assigned to either receive the transcript evidence or not receive any transcript evidence. It is important to note, however, that if participants were assigned to the no police report evidence, they automatically received transcript evidence. This was done in attempt to obtain ecological validity (in a real trial, there would not be a case in which jurors would receive no form of evidence) as well as the fact that if neither police report or transcript evidence was provided, participants would not have had enough information to effectively complete the perceptions questionnaires. After reading all assigned materials, participants the completed the perceptions and demographic questionnaires. The experiment concluded once the participant completed the demographics questionnaire.

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

#### **Analysis Plan**

First, analyses of the attention check questions were conducted to determine criteria for data exclusion. Next, the effects of the independent variables (coercion, police report condition, and transcript presence) on guilt verdicts were assessed using logistic regression analysis entering the following variables: report presence (present vs. not present), transcript presence (present vs. not present), report type (accurate vs. inaccurate) and coercion (slightly vs. highly). Effects of interactions between these variables were also assessed. Post hoc chi-square analyses were used to further examine differences in proportions of verdicts across conditions. Secondly, a series of 2x2x2 and 2x3 ANOVAs were conducted to examine potential differences in perceptions scale scores across conditions. Mean scale scores for each of the six perceptions scales were calculated for each participant by adding together item scores and dividing by the number of items in the scale. Separate post hoc t-tests were used to further analyze mean differences in the following groups: 1) report type: accurate vs inaccurate 2) report presence: police report provided vs no police report provided 3) transcript presence: transcript evidence present vs no transcript evidence present 4) coercion level: slightly vs. highly. A second logistic regression analysis (using the same independent variables listed above) was used to examine the six perceptions scale scores as predictors of guilt verdict. A third logistic regression examining demographic factors as predictors of guilt verdict was then run. A series of multiple regression



analyses was also conducted to assess demographic variables as predictors of each of the six perceptions scale scores. Lastly, preliminary qualitative data analyses on open-ended responses were conducted to determine themes in participants' reasoning regarding verdicts.

### **Attention Checks**

Data were collected from 602 participants. A series of attention checks was used to ensure that participants had completely and accurately read and comprehended the materials presented. Attention check questions included: "*How old is the suspect in this case?*", "*What key piece of evidence was found at the crime scene in this case?*", "*How was the victim killed in this case?*", "*How did the suspect know the victim in this case?*", "*What evidence did the detectives present against Corey?*", and "*What did Corey say he was doing the afternoon Jane went missing?*". All attention check questions were presented in a multiple-choice fashion with one correct answer except for "*What evidence did the detectives present against Corey?*" where a list of pieces of evidence was provided and participants were asked to mark all answers that applied.

Most (82.5%) participants correctly identified the suspects age as 16 years old. It is important to note that although some participants did answer incorrectly, most of their answers were close to the correct age (5.6% identified the suspect as 15 years-old while 3.9% identified the suspect as 17 years-old). Only 0.5% and 1.0% of participants identified the suspect as 11 or 12 years-old, respectively. We excluded seven participants due to answers that were more than 1 year different from the suspect's stated age.

Almost all (96.6%) of the participants correctly answered, "*What key piece of evidence was found at the crime scene?*" by choosing a note on lined paper, and 94.4% correctly

identified strangulation as the cause of death for the victim. Further, 90.2% correctly stated that the suspect stated he was playing video games the afternoon the victim went missing. In regard to the evidence presented to the suspect by police during the interrogation, 78.1% correctly identified “physical evidence at the crime scene” while 85.1% correctly identified “being tardy to school the day after the victim’s disappearance”.

Two of the six attention check questions were found to be predictive of answer quality on qualitative measures (how the victim was killed and how the suspect knew the victim). For example, participants who answered that the victim was shot also gave reasons for their verdict such as “yes” or “good”. Therefore, these two manipulation check questions were also used to eliminate poor quality data. In other words, when participants failed these two attention checks, their data were excluded. Participants who failed to correctly identify the suspect’s age, or answer close to the correct answer, were also excluded from further analysis. A total of seventeen participants (0.03%) were excluded solely due to attention check failure.

### **Perception Scale Scores Reliability Analysis**

Reliability analyses were conducted for each of the six perceptions scales used in the current study. Analyses revealed excellent internal consistency values for each of the six scales (refer to Table 1 for Cronbach’s alpha values).

Table 1 Reliability Coefficients for All Six Perceptions Scales

Scale	Cronbach’s Alpha Value
Perceptions of the Interrogation	0.909
Perceptions of the Confession	0.923

Understanding of Rights	0.932
Perceptions of Police Report (if provided)	0.886
Sympathy for the Suspect	0.944
Perceptions of the Police	0.895

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### **Predicted Main Effects of Police Report, Transcript, and Coercion on Verdicts**

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to assess the overall effect of condition on the dichotomous dependent variable of verdict outcome (guilty vs. not guilty) using the question “*What would be your verdict in this case (guilty vs. not guilty)?*”. The following variables were entered into a logistic regression model: report presence (present vs. not present), transcript presence (present vs not present), report type (accurate vs. inaccurate), and coercion (slightly vs. highly). Analysis revealed that the inclusion of a police report significantly increased the percentage of guilty verdicts (Wald  $\chi^2 = 15.83$ ,  $p=0.00$ , odds ratio= 0.493). This effect was strongest when no transcript evidence was provided, meaning percentages of guilty verdicts were highest in conditions in which participants only read a police report of the questioning and were not given transcript excerpts (Wald  $\chi^2 = 45.71$ ,  $p=0.00$ ). In fact, participants were four times more likely to render a verdict of not guilty when transcript evidence was not available, and they were made to rely solely on police report evidence (odds ratio= 4.22). Accuracy of the report provided (accurate vs inaccurate) was not a significant predictor of guilt verdict ( $p = 0.900$ ), and this was the case both when transcript evidence was and was not provided. Effects of coercion trended toward significance (Wald  $\chi^2 = 3.081$ ,  $p= 0.079$ , odds ratio= 1.355). Participants were more likely

to render a verdict of guilty in slightly coercive conditions than in highly coercive conditions; however, this effect was not statistically significant.

*Post-hoc* analyses were conducted to assess exactly where the significant differences occurred. Overall, 49.8% (N=300) of participants reported that they believed the suspect was guilty while 50.2% (N=303) of participants reported believing the suspect was not guilty. Further analysis assessed guilt verdicts by condition. First, a chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between guilt verdict and transcript condition (transcript evidence provided vs. no transcript evidence provided). Results revealed a significant relationship between these variables,  $\chi^2(1) = 63.53, p=0.00$ . There were significantly more guilty verdicts when transcript evidence was provided (remaining around 70% across conditions, see Table 2.) compared to when a transcript was provided (approximately 35%). When transcript evidence was not provided, the percentage of guilty verdicts was higher when the police report was inaccurate (approximately 73%) than when the report provided was an accurate representation of the questioning (approximately 68%), however this difference was not statistically significant.

The relationship between guilt verdict and report condition (accurate vs. inaccurate vs. no report provided) was also assessed. There was a significant relationship between guilt verdict and report condition  $\chi^2(2) = 16.13, p=0.00$ ; there were more guilty verdicts when a police report of the questioning of the suspect was provided (either accurate or inaccurate) (approximately 40%) compared to when no report was given (approximately 30%) when collapsed across transcript and no transcript conditions. A final chi-square test was conducted to assess the relationship between guilt verdict and coercion level (highly vs. slightly coercive), however this test revealed no overall significant relationship ( $p= 0.87$ ). However, when no police report of the questioning

was provided, percentage of guilty verdicts did significantly differ based on coercion level. Further, participants were significantly more likely to vote guilty in the slightly coercive condition (45.2%) compared to the highly coercive condition (29.7%) ( $p = 0.00$ ).

		<u>Police Report</u>		No
		Yes		
<u>Transcript</u>		Inaccurate	Accurate	
Yes	Highly	33.3% (N=16)	41.2% (N=21)	29.7% (N=27)
	Slightly	41.5% (N=22)	35.4% (N=17)	45.2% (N=47)
No	Highly	72.5% (N=37)	68.10% (N=32)	X
	Slightly	74.50% (N=41)	72.7% (N= 40)	X

Figure 2 Percentage of Guilty Verdicts by Condition

### Effects of Independent Variables on Perceptions Scale Scores

A series of 2 (transcript evidence provided: yes vs. no) x 2 (coercion level: slightly vs. highly) x 2 (report type: accurate vs inaccurate) analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to assess summated scale scores for each of the six perceptions scales used in the current study. Because the design of this study was not fully crossed, the current analyses were collapsed so to exclude participants who did not receive a police report so that effect of transcript presence (no transcript vs transcript provided) could be assessed (see Figure 2). Because the presence of police report was revealed to have a significant effect on guilt verdict, participants who did not receive a police report were excluded for the purposes of the following analyses.

		<u>Police Report</u>	
<u>Transcript</u>		Yes	No
		Inaccurate	Accurate
Yes	Highly	----	----
	Slightly	----	----
No	Highly	----	X
	Slightly	----	X

Figure 3 Conditions Included in 2x2x2 Analyses of Variance

### ***Perceptions of Interrogation***

Regarding the perceptions of the interrogation questionnaire, five of the nine scale items were reverse scored so that higher scores on each of the items would indicate more pro-suspect/pro-defense perceptions. A significant main effect of transcript presence was revealed,  $F(1, 378) = 32.66, p = 0.00$ . Participants who received transcript evidence ( $M = 5.09, SD = 1.39$ ) had significantly higher scores than participants who did not receive transcript evidence ( $M = 4.28, SD = 1.37$ ), indicating that the presence of transcript evidence resulted in less positive views of the interrogation. In other words, participants who had transcript evidence available saw the interrogation as less fair, more coercive, and more manipulative. The analysis revealed no significant main effects of coercion level or report type (accurate vs. inaccurate) nor any significant interactions. However, the interaction between coercion level and report type trended toward significance ( $p = 0.058$ ). More specifically, there was a greater mean difference in

interrogation scale score between report types (accurate vs. inaccurate) in slightly coercive conditions (mean difference= 0.3855) compared to highly coercive conditions (mean difference= 0.1230); inaccurate reports had a greater impact on verdict decision in slightly coercive conditions. This finding is in direct opposition of predictions which stated that inaccurate reports would have a greater impact in the highly coercive conditions.

### ***Perceptions of Confession***

A main effect of transcript presence was also found in the analysis of perceptions of the confession given by the suspect  $F(1, 404) = 76.24, p = 0.00$ . Participants who received transcript evidence ( $M = 3.01, SD = 1.84$ ) had significantly lower scale scores than participants who did not receive transcript evidence ( $M = 4.57, SD = 1.75$ ), with lower mean scale scores indicating perceptions that the confessions given was less voluntary, believable, or accurate. When transcript evidence was available, participants had less positive views of the confession given by the suspect, viewing the confession given as less believable, accurate, and consistent. Again, no additional main effects or interactions were revealed.

### ***Perceptions of Suspect's Understanding of Rights***

Analysis of perceptions of how well the suspect understood his legal rights (right to remain silent, right to counsel, etc.) revealed main effects of transcript presence,  $F(1, 396) = 31.64, p = 0.00$  and report type,  $F(1, 400) = 4.10, p = 0.038$ . For this scale, higher scale scores indicated the belief that the suspect displayed better understanding of his legal rights while lower scale scores indicated the belief that the suspect did not adequately understand his legal rights. Participants who were provided with transcript evidence ( $M = 4.99, SD = 1.55$ ) reported believing

that the suspect had a better understanding of his legal rights than participants who did not receive transcript evidence ( $M= 4.09$ ,  $SD= 1.68$ ). In addition, participants who received an accurate police report ( $M= 4.69$ ,  $SD= 1.70$ ) also indicated that it was more likely that that suspect understood his legal rights than participants who were provided with an inaccurate police report ( $M= 4.37$ ,  $SD= 1.64$ ). The main effect of coercion level approached significance ( $p= 0.065$ ) so that participants in slightly coercive conditions ( $M= 4.66$ ,  $SD= 1.68$ ) were more likely to perceive that the suspect understood his rights than participants in highly coercive conditions ( $M= 4.40$ ,  $SD= 1.69$ ). No significant interactions were revealed.

### ***Perceptions of Police Report***

A significant main effect of transcript presence was also revealed by analysis of perceptions of the police report provided,  $F(1, 387)= 10.08$ ,  $p= 0.002$ . As expected, when provided only with a police report ( $M= 4.67$ ,  $SD= 1.66$ ), participants had more positive views of the police report provided compared to when both a police report and transcript evidence was provided ( $M= 4.15$ ,  $SD= 1.65$ ). In this case, higher scale scores indicated more positive views of the police report provided (it was believable, accurate, and representative of the questioning conducted). It is important to note that no significant effects of report accuracy were revealed meaning that the actual accuracy of the report did not affect accuracy ratings. There were also no significant effect of coercion level.

### ***Sympathy for the Suspect***

A sympathy of the suspect scale score was calculated for each participant using three items from the six item affective reactions scale (“*I feel sorry for the suspect*”; “*I have pity for*



*the suspect*"; "*I have sympathy for the suspect*") with higher scale scores indicating more sympathy for the suspect. Again, analysis revealed a significant main effect of transcript evidence  $F(1, 401) = 46.39, p = 0.00$ , meaning when transcript excerpts of the questioning were provided, participants reported having significantly less sympathy for the suspect. Further, when presented with both a police report and transcript evidence, participants displayed significantly less sympathy for the suspect ( $M = 3.35, SD = 1.60$ ) than participants who only read a police report ( $M = 4.48, SD = 1.71$ ) (see Table 2).

### ***Perceptions of Police***

Lastly, the six item sub-scale of the perceptions of police scale was analyzed. No main effects or interactions were revealed, indicating that condition did not have a significant main effect on this particular scale score. This finding is likely due to the fact that this particular scale score was designed to tap preexisting personal beliefs and attitudes of participants rather than attitudes linked to stimulus materials presented.

Table 2 Mean Scale Scores (and SDs) for the Six Perceptions Scales by Condition

		Police Report Condition									
		Accurate				Inaccurate				No report	
Coercion Condition:		Highly		Slightly		Highly		Slightly		Highly	Slightly
Transcript Condition:		+	-	+	-	+	-	+	-	+	+
Scale:											
Interrogation	M	5.05	4.18	5.24	4.57	5.19	4.31	4.91	4.08	5.23	4.93
	SD	1.32	1.14	1.37	1.38	1.41	1.53	1.45	1.40	1.25	1.32
Confession	M	3.04	4.84	2.85	4.33	2.94	4.50	3.19	4.62	2.55	3.15
	SD	1.73	1.58	1.74	1.83	1.74	1.87	2.14	1.71	1.60	1.77

Rights	M	4.78	4.13	5.49	4.39	4.88	3.78	4.82	4.02	5.12	4.70
	SD	1.75	1.63	1.33	1.77	1.45	1.73	1.55	1.60	1.37	1.66
Police Report	M	4.06	4.93	3.93	4.49	4.25	4.70	4.31	4.58	4.30	4.51
	SD	1.58	1.38	1.73	1.83	1.79	1.77	1.51	1.62	1.58	1.59
Sympathy	M	3.41	4.62	3.28	4.09	3.31	4.57	3.32	4.69	3.08	3.57
	SD	1.72	1.68	1.57	1.75	1.55	1.81	1.55	1.57	1.45	1.68
Police	M	3.75	3.63	3.82	3.68	3.77	3.47	3.45	3.56	3.79	3.80
	SD	1.18	1.44	1.08	1.40	1.29	1.48	1.16	1.30	1.08	1.28

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A series of independent samples t-tests were also conducted as *post-hoc* tests to further analyze differences in scale scores for the six perception scales across condition groups. Further, scale scores were compared in report type (accurate vs inaccurate), report presence (police report provided vs. no police report provided), transcript presence (transcript evidence provided vs. no transcript evidence provided), and coercion (slightly vs highly) conditions.

Results revealed a significant difference in confession scale score in report present ( $M=3.82$ ,  $SD=1.96$ ) compared to report not present conditions ( $M=2.87$ ,  $SD=1.73$ );  $t(606)=-5.8$ ,  $p=0.00$  as well as a significant difference in sympathy for the suspect scale score in report present ( $M=3.93$ ,  $SD=1.75$ ) compared to report not present ( $M=3.33$ ,  $SD=1.59$ ) conditions;  $t(599)=-4.02$ ,  $p=0.00$ . These results suggest that when a police report was provided, participants had more positive views of the confession (i.e., perceived it to be more accurate, believable, and voluntary) and displayed more sympathy for the suspect.

Results also revealed significant differences in scale scores for all perceptions scales except for the police perceptions scale based on transcript presence condition (transcript evidence present vs. no transcript evidence present). More specifically, perceptions of the interrogation scale scores were significantly lower in no transcript conditions ( $M=4.28$ ,  $SD=1.37$ )

than in transcript conditions ( $M=5.08$ ,  $SD=1.33$ );  $t(566)=-6.68$ ,  $p=0.00$ , indicating that when transcript evidence was provided participants had more pro-suspect perceptions of the interrogation (i.e., perceiving it as less fair, more coercive, etc.). Confession scale scores were also significantly higher in no transcript conditions ( $M=4.57$ ,  $SD=1.75$ ) compared to transcript conditions ( $M=2.96$ ,  $SD=1.80$ );  $t(606)=10.62$ ,  $p=0.00$ , suggesting that when an interrogation transcript was provided participants perceived the confession to be less accurate, believable, and voluntary.

Perceptions of the suspect's understanding of legal rights scale score was found to be significantly higher in transcript conditions ( $M=4.94$ ,  $SD=1.55$ ) compared to no transcript conditions ( $M=4.09$ ,  $SD=1.68$ );  $t(595)=-6.206$ ,  $p=0.00$ , meaning that participants who received transcript evidence perceived that the suspect had a better understanding of his legal rights than participants who did not receive a transcript. In addition, results indicated that there were significantly higher scale scores on the perceptions of the police report and sympathy for the suspect scales in no transcript conditions ( $M=4.67$ ,  $SD=1.66$ ;  $M=4.48$ ,  $SD=1.71$ ) compared to transcript conditions ( $M=4.25$ ,  $SD=1.63$ ;  $M=3.35$ ,  $SD=1.59$ );  $t(530)=2.85$ ,  $p=0.01$ ,  $t(599)=8.08$ ,  $p=0.00$  respectively. These results indicate that when no transcript evidence was provided, participants had more positive views of the police report provided and displayed more sympathy for the suspect.

It is important to note that no significant differences in scale scores were found based on coercion level (slightly vs highly coercive) or report type (accurate vs inaccurate). However, the difference in perceptions of the suspect's understanding of rights scale score based on report type was found to be at cutoff for significance. Rights scale scores were higher in accurate report conditions ( $M=4.70$ ,  $SD=1.70$ ) compared to inaccurate report conditions ( $M=4.37$ ,  $SD=1.64$ )

indicating that when given an accurate police report participants reported believing the suspect had a better understanding of his legal rights,  $t(398)=1.98, p=0.50$ .

A series of 2x3 ANOVA's was then conducted in which participants in no police report conditions were included and participants in the no transcript conditions were excluded (see Figure 4 below), however these analyses revealed no significant results.

		<u>Police Report</u>		No
		Inaccurate	Accurate	
Transcript	Yes	----	----	----
	Slightly	----	----	----
No	Highly	----	----	X
	Slightly	----	----	X

Figure 4 Conditions Included in the 2x3 Analyses of Variance

### Scale Scores as Predictors of Guilt Verdict

Scale scores for each perceptions scale (perceptions of interrogation, confession, etc.) were calculated for each participant. A logistic regression analysis, using the same independent variables previously described, was conducted to assess the effect of each summated scale score on overall guilt verdict. Results revealed that overall perceptions of the interrogation (Wald  $\chi^2=9.40, p=0.002$ ), perceptions of the confession (Wald  $\chi^2=26.06, p=0.00$ ), and sympathy for the suspect (Wald  $\chi^2=19.67, p=0.00$ ), were all significantly predictive of guilt verdict. As expected,

higher interrogation scale scores (indicating more negative, pro-suspect views of the interrogation) resulted in more not guilty verdicts. In fact, participants with more negative views of the interrogation were 1.89 times more likely to render a verdict of not guilty. Additionally, lower scale scores on the perceptions of the confession scale and sympathy for the suspect scale were associated with more not guilty verdicts. This suggests that higher sympathy for juvenile suspects and defendants was associated with more guilty verdicts. Contrary to predictions, it also suggests that more negative views of the confessions (less accurate, believable, and voluntary) were associated with more guilty verdicts.

Simple correlational analyses were also conducted to assess for relationships between guilt verdict and scale scores for each of the six perceptions scales. Unlike the logistic regression, results revealed that all scale scores were significantly correlated with guilt verdict. Guilt verdict was found to be significantly positively correlated with scores on the suspect's understanding of rights scale ( $r = 0.549, p = 0.00$ ), the police perceptions scale ( $r = 0.255, p = 0.00$ ), and the perceptions of the interrogation scale ( $r = 0.675, p = 0.00$ ). These findings suggest that more negative views (e.g., more coercive) of the interrogation were associated with a verdict of not guilty. Interestingly, these results also suggest that perceptions that the suspect understood his legal rights and more positive perceptions of the police in general were positively related to not guilty verdicts. The more participants perceived that the suspect understood his legal rights, the more likely they were to render a verdict of not guilty. Additionally, more positive views of the police in general were related to not guilty verdicts. Significant negative correlations were found between guilt verdict and scale scores on the perceptions of the police report scale ( $r = -0.498, p = 0.00$ ), the perceptions of the confession scale ( $r = -0.736, p = 0.00$ ), and the sympathy for the suspect scale ( $r = -0.626, p = 0.00$ ). These results indicate that verdicts of not guilty were

associated with more negative views of the police report provided (when one was provided) and more negative views of the confession given by the suspect.

Additionally, logistic regression results were further confirmed in that positive perceptions of the interrogation (i.e., when the interrogation was perceived as fair) resulted in significantly more guilty verdicts. More positive views of the confession given by the suspect (voluntary, believable, and accurate) also related to significantly more guilty verdicts. In addition, more sympathy displayed for the suspect in the case resulted in significantly more guilty verdicts. Finally, in terms of perceptions of police in general, more negative perceptions of police resulted in significantly more guilty verdicts. The only scale score that was not predictive of guilt verdict was perceptions of the suspect's understanding of his legal rights.

### **Demographic Factors as Predictors of Guilt Verdict**

Another logistic regression analysis was conducted to assess the relations between demographic factors and guilt verdicts. Demographic factors including age, gender, racial identity, education, political orientation, sympathy for juveniles in the legal system were included. Of the demographic factors included in the demographics survey, education (Wald  $\chi^2=6.45$ ,  $p=0.01$ ) and sympathy for juvenile suspects/ defendants (Wald  $\chi^2=18.75$ ,  $p=0.00$ ) proved significant predictors of overall guilt verdict. For the purposes of analysis, education was re-coded into four categories (less than high school, high school graduate, some/ completed college, graduate degree). Higher education achieved was associated with more not guilty verdicts; in fact, participants with higher education achievements were 1.16 times more likely to render a verdict of not guilty. Increased sympathy for juvenile who commit crimes was also found to be associated with a greater likelihood of rendering a not guilty verdict (odds ratio=

2.294). Other demographic factors such as gender, age, political orientation, and racial identity were not significantly predictive of guilt verdict.

In order to assess for the potential of any of the significant demographics moderating the relationships between condition and guilt verdict, a logistic regression including the significant independent variables and demographic factors was conducted. Results showed a significant interaction between report condition and highest level of education achieved (Wald  $\chi^2 = 7.756$ ,  $p = 0.005$ ). Moderation analysis revealed that education level moderated the relationship between report condition and guilt verdict. A follow-up analysis of variance was conducted to determine differences between each education group. Results indicated that the graduate school group (including participants with some graduate school, a graduate degree, or professional degree) was significantly different from all other groups. Further, the graduate school group was more likely to render a verdict of not guilty when a police report was given (regardless of accuracy) compared to all other groups. In other words, the less than high school, high school graduate, and college groups appear to have been more influenced by the presence of a police report and therefore more likely to vote guilty. In addition, results indicated that participants with less than a high school diploma/ GED were more likely to render a verdict of guilty in the no report and accurate report conditions compared to all other groups. However, this result should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size of this group ( $N = 7$ ).

### **Demographic Factors as Predictors of Scale Scores**

A series of multiple-regression analyses were run to assess demographic factors as predictors of the individual perceptions scale scores. Demographics factors of gender, age, ethnicity, political orientation, and highest level of education achieved were included in the

current analyses. Self-reported sympathy for juvenile criminals was also included to examine whether this factor was significantly related to perceptions of the case.

Sympathy for juveniles who commit crimes was found to be a significant predictor of all six perception scale scores. Specifically, more sympathy for juveniles was significantly related to more negative (pro-suspect) perceptions of the interrogation ( $\beta=0.434, p=0.000$ ), more positive views of the police report if one was provided ( $\beta=0.335, p=0.000$ ), and more sympathy felt for the juvenile suspect in this particular case ( $\beta=0.839, p=0.000$ ). These findings indicate that participants who reported more sympathy for juveniles who commit crimes had more negative views of the interrogation, more positive views of the police report provided, and displayed more sympathy for the juvenile suspect in this specific case. Surprisingly, more sympathy for juveniles was also significantly related to higher confession scale scores ( $\beta=0.507, p=0.000$ ) indicating more positive views of the confession given (voluntary, believable, and accurate). Further, less sympathy was significantly associated with higher perceptions of the suspects understanding of rights scale scores ( $\beta=-0.451, p=0.000$ ) and higher perceptions of police scale scores ( $\beta=-0.339, p=0.000$ ), indicating that participants who reported less sympathy for juvenile criminals, in general perceived that the suspect in the case better understand his legal rights and had more positive attitudes toward the police in general.

Analyses also revealed that females on average had more negative views of the interrogation, seeing it as less fair and more coercive ( $\beta=0.354, p=0.026$ ). In addition, lower education levels were significantly associated with higher sympathy levels for the juvenile suspect in this case ( $\beta=-0.10, p=0.011$ ), indicating that participants with lower education levels were more likely to display more sympathy for the juvenile in this case. Political orientation was found to be predictive of perceptions of police in general so that participants who reported being



more conservative displayed more positive attitudes and perceptions of police in general ( $\beta = 0.363, p = 0.000$ ).

### **Qualitative Analysis**

Qualitative analysis was conducted on the first open-ended question (i.e., “*Why did you choose guilty/ not guilty?*”) using a 20-code coding scheme in order to determine themes in participant answers (see Appendix F for list of codes used). Two independent raters coded 95% of the responses, achieving inter-rater reliability of 0.82; all disagreements in codes were eventually resolved through discussion. Themes were then compared between verdict to determine if differences existed between participants who voted guilty and those who voted not guilty.

The most common themes for participants who voted guilty included: he confessed therefore he is guilty ( $N = 117$ ), evidence indicates guilty ( $N = 89$ ), guilty behavior ( $N = 84$ ), and the confession given was voluntary ( $N = 47$ ). The most common themes for participants who voted not guilty included: the interrogation was coercive ( $N = 184$ ), lack of/ unsubstantial evidence ( $N = 140$ ), the confession given was due to fatigue (i.e., participants directly mentioned the length of time the suspect was questioned) ( $N = 107$ ), no lawyer/ parent present ( $N = 59$ ), and the suspect was too young ( $N = 46$ ).

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

The current study was conducted in order to assess how mock jurors' perceptions of a juvenile confession may vary as a function of questioning coerciveness (highly vs. slightly), police report accuracy (accurate vs. inaccurate), as well as type of evidence presented (police report only vs. transcript evidence only vs. both). This is the first study to analyze these factors together using a juvenile confession case.

In the present study, a significantly larger percentage of participants perceived the juvenile suspect as guilty when transcript evidence was unavailable and they were required to rely solely on a police report of the questioning. Further, when no transcript was given, participants reported more positive views of the interrogation (rating it as more fair, less coercive, and less manipulative) and the confession given by the suspect (rating it as more voluntary, believable, and accurate). Participants also reported more positive views of the police report when no transcript evidence was provided, rating the police report as more accurate, believable, and more reflective of the actual questioning. In addition, as predicted, results indicated that relying solely on a police report, regardless of accuracy, resulted in significantly more guilty verdicts. These results suggest that reading only a police account of questioning of a juvenile suspect leads to more negative views of the suspect, therefore increasing the likelihood of a guilty verdict. Based on the current findings it appears that mock jurors' ability to critically

analyze a suspect's confession and detect coerciveness of an interrogation is significantly diminished by reading a police report of the questioning.

Past research on actual police reports of questioning of suspects has indicated frequent errors of omission; coercive tactics used during questioning such as confrontation, leniency, and false evidence presentation are consistently absent from the police report of the questioning (Kassin et al., 2017). Thus, mock jurors tend to mischaracterize innocent suspects as guilty when only a police report of the interrogation conducted with the suspect is provided (Kassin et al., 2017). The current study further confirmed this finding by showing that relying solely on police report evidence lead to almost double the percentage of guilty verdicts compared to rates for mock jurors who were provided with transcript evidence of the questioning. Additionally, research has shown that police reports alone, without the addition of transcript evidence, leads mock jurors to perceive questioning as less coercive and pressure-filled (Kassin et al., 2017)

The present study builds on past research by showing that the mere presence of police report evidence can lead to pro-police biases in mock jurors. Even when transcript evidence was provided, the addition of a police report of the questioning was associated with more guilty verdicts and more positive perceptions of the questioning and confession. The presence of a police report also appeared to diminish mock jurors' ability to detect coerciveness of the interrogation conducted. When transcript evidence was available to participants, they saw both the slightly and highly coercive interrogations as coercive and manipulative, as indicated by low rates of guilty verdicts and overall higher interrogation scale scores. However, when a police report was also available, their perceptions concerning the interrogation were more positive and they saw it as less psychologically coercive overall. For example, when a police report was provided, regardless of accuracy, participants on average rated the interrogation approximately 5

on a 7-point Likert scale, while those who did *not* receive a police report obtained approximately a 4 on average.

Similar patterns of findings have been observed in studies regarding hearsay testimony in child sexual abuse cases (Tubb, Wood, & Hosch, 1999; Warren et al., 2002). For example, when mock jurors are given the actual interview (via transcript or verbatim description) conducted with the child witness, they are better able to assess the interview's reliability and suggestibility (Tubb et al., 1999). In addition, mock jurors presented only with gist hearsay testimony by the interviewer (omitting most specific questions and describing the questioning process as more open-ended) were significantly more likely to find the defendant guilty compared those presented with verbatim interview evidence (Warren et al., 2002). Researchers have hypothesized that these effects occur because gist testimonies present a neater view of the interview, often leaving out inconsistencies as well as any suggestive or leading questions.

These findings directly parallel with the current study by providing further evidence that indirect accounts of questioning of witnesses significantly distort what actually occurred during questioning and therefore influence mock jurors' perceptions of the questioning. These discoveries together suggest that indirect accounts of questioning (of witnesses and suspects) may affect mock jurors' ability to critically analyze the questioning, making it more difficult for them to detect suggestibility and coerciveness. It appears that mock jurors are taking these indirect accounts at face value. The results of the current study show that this can be extremely problematic for juvenile suspects who may falsely confess as a result of coercive interrogations; mock jurors are significantly more likely to find an innocent suspect guilty when these indirect accounts are presented.

When predictors of perceptions of interrogations and confessions (i.e., pre-existing individual differences such as demographic characteristics, sympathy for juveniles, and attitudes toward police) were examined, level of participant education and sympathy for juveniles each significantly predicted verdicts. Past research has indicated that higher sympathy displayed for juveniles as suspects and defendants is associated with more negative perceptions of the confession and therefore not guilty verdicts (Redlich et al., 2008). The current study further confirmed this finding as participants who reported feeling more sympathy for juveniles who commit crimes were more likely to vote not guilty. Furthermore, higher levels of education were associated with more not guilty verdicts, suggesting that participants with more education more critically analyzed the case materials and confession. Although it is also possible that people with higher education are more skeptical of the police in general, this conclusion was not supported by the current study as police perceptions scale scores did not significantly differ between education groups.

Education level was also found to interact with report condition in that participants who had some level of graduate education or a graduate/professional degree were significantly more likely than all other education groups to vote not guilty even when a police report was present. In addition, participants with less than a high school diploma were significantly more likely to render a guilty verdict when a police report was present, however due to small sample size ( $N=7$ ) these results must be interpreted with caution. Importantly, the interaction of education and report condition did not change the effect of report condition, suggesting that it does not require a specific type of person to be affected by police reports. In other words, the effect of police reports on guilty verdict spans across demographic groups.

Prior research has found significant gender differences in perceptions of juvenile suspects and defendants; female mock jurors on average are more critical of police interrogations of juvenile suspects and more likely to believe a juvenile defendant's claims of falsely confessing (Redlich et al., 2010). However, it appears that this effect is moderated by sympathy levels. Female mock jurors tend to have higher sympathy levels for juveniles overall, so the effects may be better explained by sympathy level rather than gender per se (Redlich et al., 2010). The current study did not replicate any prior findings related to sympathy for the suspect/ defendant. In fact, in the current study, more sympathy displayed for the suspect was significantly associated with more guilty verdicts and this effect was not different based on participant gender.

## **Limitations**

The largest limitation of the current study is the use of a fabricated rather than actual juvenile confession case and accompanying materials (police reports and transcript excerpts). The current study was designed to replicate the findings of Kassin and colleagues (2017) using a juvenile suspect. However, it would be very difficult, costly, and potentially unethical to subject juveniles to a mock crime and interrogation and to obtain a sample of police officers to question them. Therefore, we attempted to improve ecological validity by modeling the case and transcript excerpts on an actual juvenile false confession case. Furthermore, police reports were created to adhere as closely as possible to the real police reports from Kassin and colleagues (2017). However, it is unknown whether the results found in the current study would generalize to real juvenile false confession cases. In addition, jurors in a real-life juvenile false confession case would receive far more information and evidence during the trial process than the information provided in the current study. For example, jurors would likely be exposed to expert

testimony, analyses of physical evidence related to the crime, testimony and cross-examination of witnesses (including the defendant and police officers) and would likely receive jury instructions concerning burden of proof and how to analyze the confession and interrogation. Real jurors would also be given the chance to deliberate as a group instead of making a verdict decision on their own which could alter some jurors' perceptions post-evidence presentation.

Secondly, the current study used a high-profile juvenile false confession case as the model for the case materials which may have led to some biased results. It is possible that some of the participants were familiar with the real-life case the current fictional case was heavily based on which may have led to an inability to objectively analyze case materials presented. While none of the participants actually noted the Deskovic case in their open-ended question answers, some did mention similar cases such as the Brendan Dassey and Central Park Five cases. This may indicate that the current sample was not completely naïve which could have altered the current results. However, it should be noted that in a recent study, Mindthoff and colleagues (2018) found that despite increases in public awareness of false confession cases, people were still skeptical that confessions given may be false.

Another limitation involves the manipulation of interrogation coerciveness. Although the highly coercive interrogations contained three more instances of maximization and three more of minimization and were described as lasting 4 hours longer, mock jurors did not rate the slightly and highly coercive conditions any differently and they did not result in differing verdicts. In fact, participants appeared to see both the highly and slightly coercive interrogation conditions as very coercive and manipulative. It is possible that the two transcript versions were too similar and "slightly" may have been a misnomer.

Although I attempted to obtain a sample that was representative of all potential jurors in the United States by using both a student and Amazon MTurk sample, the final sample contained a large portion of educated (some college and higher) Caucasian (82.4%) individuals. Racial minorities as well as less educated individuals were significantly under-represented in the current study. Also, the mean age of the current sample (35.87), although above the typical mean age for a college sample, still skewed slightly young meaning it may not be entirely representative of the potential juror population. It is possible that results would have varied had the current sample been more diverse in these areas.

Finally, given the number of statistical analyses conducted on the current data set, the significance level of  $p = .05$  may be too liberal and some of these results may have been due to chance alone. Particularly for the series of scale scores analyses, some of the findings should be viewed as exploratory and interpreted with caution.

## **Implications**

Being wrongfully convicted has been shown to have detrimental psychological and social effects on individuals. Research has shown that many individuals released following a wrongful conviction experience a variety of psychological and psychiatric issues including but not limited to depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Grounds, 2004). Many of these disorders develop as a result of the individual's feelings of isolation in their claims of innocence and being punished for a crime they did not commit. Individuals may also experience difficulties with interpersonal relationships due to a fundamental loss of trust in other people resulting from being wrongfully labeled as guilty by police officers, jury members, and the public (Grounds, 2004).



Adaptation to the world outside of prison has also proven to be extremely difficult for exonerees. Many exonerees experience great difficulty reintegrating with normal society; after living in a predictable, highly controlled environment, the real-world is often overwhelming (Grounds, 2004). In addition, more often than not, exonerees are released without the aid of social services or supports or any kind of financial compensation for the miscarriage of justice they have endured (Grounds, 2004). Following release, exonerees often experience social stigma; once convicted, many exonerees continue to be labeled as guilty despite the court definitively stating otherwise (Grounds, 2004; Scherr, Normile, & Putney, 2018). Research has also indicated that exonerees are viewed more negatively by the public than persons with no criminal history and in some instances as guilty parolees (Thompson, Molina, & Levett, 2011). , Thus, many exonerees have difficulty finding employment or establishing meaningful interpersonal relationships.

Past research on perceptions of exonerees has suggested that those who were initially convicted due to false confessions experience heightened stigma following release (Scherr et al., 2018). In a recent study by Scherr and colleagues (2018), participants perceived false confession exonerees as more guilty and less intelligent compared to other types of exonerees and were less willing to support efforts to support the exoneree through the reintegration process (such as psychological counseling and job training). False confession exonerees may be judged more negatively than other types of exonerees because people make dispositional attributions to make sense of and explain why an innocent person would confess to a crime they did not commit (Woestehoff & Meissner, 2016). For example, many people believe that the only explanations for why an innocent person would falsely confess include mental illness and/or low intelligence (Chojnacki, Cicchini, & White, 2008). In addition, people may view false confession exonerees

as more responsible for their legal outcome (i.e., they were imprisoned as a result of their own actions and their conviction could have been avoided had they acted differently) (Scherr et al., 2018). Overall, research suggests that despite public exoneration, persons who have been wrongfully convicted experience a variety of psychological and social issues following release and that these consequences may be more extreme for false confession exonerees.

Very little research has been conducted to assess consequences of juvenile wrongful convictions and specifically the consequences for juvenile false confession exonerees. However, it is likely that juvenile exonerees would experience similar consequences as adult exonerees. Moreover, consequences for juvenile exonerees may be exacerbated due to age-related factors. For example, because wrongfully convicted juveniles are imprisoned during developmentally formative years, they may experience more intense psychological and social consequences than adults. Based on the previously stated findings, it is clear that the time to intervene is before the wrongful conviction ever occurs. Unfortunately, however, it is too late for many; the damage is already done. Many juveniles who falsely confess receive lengthy sentences and spend several years in prison. For example, Jeff Deskovic spent nearly 16 years in prison for a murder he did not commit (InnocenceProject, 2019).

The findings underline the importance of the current study. A significant proportion of participants in the current study judged the juvenile suspect as guilty when a police report of the questioning and confession was provided; they might not have done so had they viewed only the actual interrogation. This is problematic because in real life confession trials jurors will always be exposed to police reports, police testimony, or both, concerning the confession obtained from the suspect, and they will be presented with this information prior to hearing from the defense. Based on the current results, this suggests that many jurors may be immediately biased against

the defendant, subsequently increasing the risk of wrongful conviction. Furthermore, jurors are not always presented with transcripts or recordings of the actual interrogations, and complete records of the interrogations do not always exist (Kassin et al., 2007) . In fact, most police departments in the U.S. resist recording interrogations citing that it would hinder the interrogation process and contaminate results; they report audio recording interrogations roughly 30% of the time and using video recording approximately 8% of the time (Kassin et al., 2007). The current study underlines the need for this more accurate type of record keeping by clearly illustrating its profound effects on jurors' perceptions and ultimately verdict decision.

## **Future Directions**

Despite the limitations of the present study, we expanded upon the results found by Kassin and colleagues (2017) and extended them to juvenile confession cases. The current study is an important step in the study of mock jurors' perceptions of confessions as it is the first to analyze questioning quality, police report accuracy, and type of evidence presented together simultaneously. The current study is also the first to analyze these factors using a juvenile confession case. Overall, the present findings suggest that type of evidence presented to mock jurors has a profound effect on how they perceive a juvenile confession. More specifically, results indicate that reading police reports of suspect questioning leads mock jurors to judge a juvenile suspect as guilty and that this effect is heightened when verbatim evidence (i.e., transcripts) is not provided.

Because this is the first study specifically looking at these factors using a juvenile confession case, further research is needed to replicate and generalize the present findings to other types of juvenile interrogation cases. More specifically, these effects should be assessed

using non-violent and non-sexual crimes. The current study did not replicate any sympathy effects displayed in prior research; more sympathy for the juvenile in this case was associated with more guilty verdicts. This could be due to the fact that the case used in the current study was a violent and sexual crime (rape and murder). Therefore, future studies should use crimes of a different nature.

In addition, potential factors that may alter the effects of police report evidence should be assessed. For instance, past research has shown that age of the suspect can affect mock jurors' perceptions of confession evidence (Redlich et al., 2008). The current study used a 16-year-old suspect; future research should determine whether results extend to older or younger juvenile suspects. Perceptions of confessions have also been shown to be affected by the suspects' mental status; mock jurors are much more likely to believe a suspect has falsely confessed if the suspect is described as mentally ill or having an intellectual impairment (Mindthoff et al., 2018). Therefore, future studies may manipulate the presentation of the juvenile suspect's mental status.

Recent research has also indicated that use of expert testimony can effectively increase juror sensitivity to false confession evidence (Woestehoff & Meissner, 2016). By providing scientific evidence and research on false confession risk factors such as coercive tactics and dispositional characteristics such as youth, expert witness testimony can help jurors more objectively judge confession evidence presented at trial. Further, recent research indicated that over three quarters of mock jurors agreed that expert testimony concerning how and why false confessions may occur would be useful in making a verdict decision (Mindthoff et al., 2018). Future studies should analyze the effect expert testimony in conjunction with police report evidence to assess how expert testimony may diminish the biasing effects of police reports.

## **Conclusion**

Previous research has demonstrated that police reports of interrogations frequently omit prevalence of manipulative tactics used and downplay the overall coerciveness of the interrogation. Thus, relying solely on police reports of questioning of a suspect leads to biases against the suspect causing mock jurors to misjudge an innocent suspect as guilty (Kassin et al., 2017). The current study expanded these findings by showing that they hold true even when transcript excerpts of the questioning are provided. This study is also the first to extend these findings to a juvenile confession case. Participants who were provided with a police report of the questioning had more positive perceptions of the interrogation and confession and were more likely to find the innocent suspect guilty. These findings are crucial as they have direct implications for real life juvenile confession cases. The current study shows how easily jurors can be biased against a defendant that has confessed therefore increasing the risk of wrongful convictions. Future research should examine how other possible factors such as expert testimony and the suspect's age, mental state, intellectual ability, or other case characteristics can impact juror verdicts.

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## APPENDIX A

### IRB APPROVAL LETTER

**Institutional Review Board**

Dept 4915  
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instrb@utc.edu  
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TO: Morgan N. Andrews **IRB # 18-093**  
Drs. David Ferrier, David F. Ross, and Amye R. Warren

FROM: Lindsay Pardue, Director of Research Integrity  
Dr. Amy Doolittle, IRB Committee Chair

DATE: 8/21/2018

SUBJECT: IRB #18-093: Perceptions of Juvenile False Confessions as a Function of Police Report  
and Interview Quality

Thank you for submitting your application for research involving human subjects to The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga Institutional Review Board. Your proposal was evaluated in light of the federal regulations that govern the protection of human subjects and approved via the expedited review procedure authorized by 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110.

You must include the following approval statement on research materials seen by participants and used in research reports:

***The Institutional Review Board of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (FWA00004149) has approved this research project # 18-093.***

Please keep in mind that all research must be conducted according to the proposal submitted to the UTC IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an Application for Changes, Annual Review, or Project Termination/Completion form to the UTC IRB. Please bear in mind that significant changes could result in having to develop a new application for submission and approval. Your protocol will be automatically closed at the end of the proposed research period unless a change request application is submitted. No research may take place under a closed or expired protocol.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the UTC IRB as soon as possible. Once notified, we will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event.

## APPENDIX B

### CASE BACKGROUND

At approximately 4pm on the afternoon of August 12th, 2010, 16 year-old Jane Smith left her Winchester, Illinois home. Jane made her way to a nature trail close to her home. By 8pm Jane had not returned home, her parents began to worry and called the police to report their daughter missing.

The next day, Jane had still not returned home and was officially declared missing by the Winchester Police Department at approximately 8pm August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2010. The police department organized search parties to search the nature trail Jane was last thought to be as well as the areas surrounding her home. Jane's iPod and camera were found along the trail along with a torn piece of clothing thought to be from Jane's sports bra.

At approximately 10am on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010 police dogs alerted officers to a small area of brush about 20 feet away off the middle of the trail. Under a pile of leaves and debris, Jane's body was found in a shallow hole. She was partially nude and had several bruises and scratches covering her body. A handwritten note on lined notebook paper was also found in the hole with the body, however the words on the note could not be deciphered. A homicide investigation was immediately initiated by the Winchester Police Department. Upon further examination of the body, the county coroner determined that Jane had been raped, beaten, and strangled to death before the killer attempted to cover her body. A rape kit was conducted in order to obtain DNA evidence and Jane's possessions were assessed for fingerprints. No conclusive biological evidence was found.

Jane's funeral was held three days later. Among the attendees was 16 year-old Corey Brown, a shy student who Jane had tutored in math after school for the past few months. Corey stated to Jane's parents that she was one of his only friends. At the funeral Corey was visibly upset, crying and distraught. Corey's behavior began to raise suspicion in the detectives on the

case and as a result, Corey became the primary suspect. Police began to investigate Corey and found that he had been tardy to school the morning after Jane was reported missing. Investigation of Corey's locker also revealed lined notebook paper similar to that found under the body at the crime scene.

Over the next month, police spoke with Corey a total of eight different times in which he repeatedly denied any involvement in the murder. However, he reported wanting to help with the investigation and continued to cooperate.

On September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 police asked to speak to Corey again. Corey drove himself to the police station. He was placed in a small room at the police station, without a parent or attorney present, where the questioning began.



## APPENDIX C

### TRANSCRIPT EXCERPTS

### ***Highly Coercive Excerpts***

**Wednesday September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 10:00am**

Detective Adams: Good morning Corey. As you remember, I am Detective Adams, and this is Detective Davis and we just want to talk to you for a little bit about the Jane Smith case, which I know you are familiar with. Is that okay?

Corey Brown: Yeah.

Detective Adams: Corey, I just ask that while we talk today you answer all of my questions honestly. You won't be in any trouble as long as you tell the truth. Can you promise to tell the truth, Corey?

Corey Brown: Yeah.

Detective Davis: Okay, so before we get started I just want to remind you of your rights, which we have gone over before. You have the right to not talk to us and if at any point you want an attorney, just let us know, okay? But remember, Corey, you aren't in any trouble we just want to talk to you. Do you agree to talk to us, Corey?

Corey Brown: Yeah.

Detective Adams: Great. So can you remind me of exactly how you knew Jane?

Corey Brown: She went to school with me. She tutored me in math a couple times.

Detective Davis: That was nice of her. Do you think that was a nice thing for her to do Corey?

Corey Brown: Yeah, she was a nice person. She helped me out a lot. I'm not very good at math.

Detective Davis: So you liked spending time with her?

Corey Brown: Yeah.

Detective Adams: Would you say you two were friends?

Corey Brown: Yeah, I think we were.

Detective Davis: Do you have a lot of friends, Corey?

Corey Brown: I have a few.

Detective Davis: So would you say Jane was one of your few friends?

Corey Brown: Yeah, I guess so.

Detective Adams: Would you say you were close friends? Like best friends?

Corey Brown: No, I wouldn't say we were close. Just friends, that's all.

Detective Adams: Oh, I figured you two were close, considering how upset Jane's parents said you were at her funeral.

Detective Davis: Why were you so upset Corey?

Corey Brown: It was really sad. She was one of my friends. She didn't deserve to die like that. It was just sad that's all.

Detective Adams: Die like what? What can you tell me about how she died?

Corey Brown: I just meant she didn't deserve to be hurt. She was a good person.

Detective Adams: So if she didn't deserve to die, then you understand why you need to help us catch her killer? That's why we asked you to talk to us.

Detective Davis: All we are trying to do, Corey, is get to the bottom of this, and we think you know a lot more than you are telling us. So why don't you just tell us what you know Corey?

Corey Brown: I've already told you everything I know.

Detective Adams: I think maybe there's more you can remember.

Detective Davis: Think, Corey. You have to know more than you are telling us.

**Wednesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 11:45am**

Detective Adams: Ok, let's go back to the day that Jane went missing. Where were you that day? August 12, 2010?

Corey Brown: I was at school.

Detective Adams: What about after school? What did you do when school was over?

Corey Brown: I went home and played some video games with my cousin.

Detective Adams: Do you remember what time it was when you got home?

Corey Brown: I think 3:30.

Detective Adams: And do you remember how long you played video games with your cousin?

Corey Brown: About 2 hours.

Detective Adams: So until about 5:30? Is that correct?

Corey Brown: Yes, I think so.

Detective Adams: So what game were you playing?

Corey Brown: Probably Call of Duty.

Detective Adams: Is your cousin going to be able to back you up on this?

Corey Brown: Um I don't know. I guess so. You can ask him.

Detective Davis: We have asked him, and he isn't so clear on this.

Detective Adams: Did you go anywhere else that evening, other than your house?

Corey Brown: No.

Detective Adams: So when you got home from school, you stayed there the rest of the night?

Corey Brown: Yes.

Detective Adams: And you're positive that you did not leave your house after getting home from school?

Corey Brown: Yes.

Detective Brown: If we talk to your mother, she can verify all this?

Corey Brown: Yeah, I guess so.

Detective Davis: Try to think harder, Corey. I know it was a while ago so it can be hard to remember everything you did that day, but we really need you to try. Are you sure you didn't do anything else that evening? Maybe you played basketball or took a walk in the park near your house? Did you do anything like that?

Corey Brown: No I just stayed at home.

Detective Davis: Ok Corey. I'll just cut to the chase. I asked to speak with you today because we have evidence that links you to Jane's murder.

Corey Brown: But I didn't do anything! I told you before she was my friend. I wouldn't do that to her!

Detective Adams: Okay, Corey, calm down. Everything will be fine as long as you cooperate with us. We'll make sure everything works out for you, but you have to work with us here. We can't help you unless you help us.

**Wednesday September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 1:00pm**

Detective Adams: We've been talking a while now Corey, and I think it's time for you to be honest. Please tell me exactly what happened, and we can be done here, you can go home. Can you do that Corey?

Corey Brown: I keep telling you I didn't do anything! I can't tell you what happened if I don't know what happened!

Detective Adams: Our records show that you were tardy to school the day after Jane went missing.

Detective Davis: Some of the other kids at school tell us you were acting suspiciously. Why were you tardy that day?

Corey Brown: I wasn't feeling well that morning, so I decided to stay home for a while until I felt better.

Detective Adams: Why didn't you feel well?

Corey Brown: I just didn't, I don't know.

Detective Adams: Are you sure you weren't feeling guilty about doing something you shouldn't have?

Corey Brown: No! I just didn't feel good that's all. Look, I didn't have anything to do with this! I've told you over and over! Why don't you believe me?

Detective Adams: There's no reason to get upset Corey, if you really didn't do anything. But your reactions to my questions so far are telling me that's not the case. Just remember Corey, I am here to help you. I am on your side. If you just tell me what happened I can help you. I'll make sure everything works out in your favor.

Corey Brown: I promise you I didn't hurt her! I would never do that!

Detective Adams: Ok Corey. I'll level with you. We examined your locker at school and found lined paper that matches the paper a note found at the crime scene was written on. We have physical evidence linking you to the crime scene Corey. We know you're our guy, we just need you to tell us what happened. And this is how it's going to work; either you tell us what happened and let us help you or you continue to lie and make excuses and I tell the judge you wouldn't cooperate with us. Which do you want Corey?

Detective Davis: Here is what we think happened, Corey. We think you liked Jane a lot more than you are telling us and maybe you even wanted to date her. We think you saw her go into the woods that evening and you followed her to ask her out. And when she said no you kept persisting, but her answer didn't change and that's when you got mad. Maybe you grabbed her when she tried to get away and put your hand over her mouth, so she wouldn't scream. But maybe you grabbed her a little too hard and choked her. Maybe it was all an accident Corey.

Detective Adams: We don't think you did this on purpose Corey. We know you are a good kid. We think you just got carried away and made a mistake, but you have to own up to that mistake now. It's time for you to tell the truth.

### **Wednesday September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010 3:00pm**

Detective Adams: The fact of the matter is, Corey, all the evidence points to you being the guy who did this. It's only a matter of time before we get the DNA evidence that will confirm what we already know. If you confess before that happens, things will go much better for you. Now if you continue to make things difficult for us, your punishment will be much worse, I can guarantee that.

Corey Brown: I just don't understand why this is happening to me.

Detective Davis: Corey, we've gone over this several times, you have to be honest with us. We already know what happened and that you are responsible for this. C'mon Corey, what would your mother think of you lying to us like this? Do you think this would make her happy?

Corey Brown: No, but I'm not lying.

Detective Davis: Then tell us what really happened in the woods that day.

Corey Brown: I can't do this anymore, I just want this to be over!

Detective Davis: There is only one way to leave this all behind you, Corey. Just tell us what you did. We all know what you did, Corey, you just have to say it.

Corey: Okay.

Detective Adams: So let's get this straight, you had a crush on Jane and followed her into the woods that evening to ask her out. She refused, and you got angry and killed her. You strangled her and hit her head with something. Is that about right Corey?

Corey Brown: Yeah. Sure. Can I go home now?

Detective Davis: Tell us how it happened and this will be over.

Corey Brown: I followed Jane into the woods. I grabbed her and put my hand over her mouth. I must have held it there too long because she stopped breathing.

Detective Adams: And then what happened? What happened to her head?

Corey Brown: I hit it.

Detective Davis: What'd you hit it with?

Corey Brown: A rock.

Detective Adams: So you hit her with a rock.

Corey Brown: Yeah.

Detective Davis: Why did you do it, Corey?

Corey Brown: I don't know

Detective Davis: Come on Corey, you need to tell us the truth here.

Corey Brown: I was mad because she wouldn't go out with me, I guess.

Detective Adams: Okay, Corey, we are going to get this statement typed up so that you can sign it for us.

Corey Brown: Okay.

### ***Slightly Coercive Excerpts***

**Wednesday September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 10:00am**

Detective Adams: Good morning Corey. As you remember, I am Detective Adams, and this is Detective Davis and we just want to talk to you for a little bit about the Jane Smith case, which I know you are familiar with. Is that okay?

Corey Brown: Yeah.

Detective Adams: Corey, I just ask that while we talk today you answer all of my questions honestly. You won't be in any trouble as long as you tell the truth. Can you promise to tell the truth, Corey?

Corey Brown: Yeah.

Detective Davis: Okay, so before we get started I just want to remind you of your rights, which we have gone over before. You have the right to not talk to us and if at any point you want an attorney, just let us know, okay? Do you agree to talk to us, Corey?

Corey Brown: Yeah.

Detective Adams: Great. So can you remind me of exactly how you knew Jane?

Corey Brown: She went to school with me. She tutored me in math a couple times.

Detective Davis: That was nice of her. Do you think that was a nice thing for her to do Corey?

Corey Brown: Yeah, she was a nice person. She helped me out a lot. I'm not very good at math.

Detective Davis: So you liked spending time with her?

Corey Brown: Yeah.

Detective Adams: Would you say you two were friends?

Corey Brown: Yeah, I think we were.

Detective Davis: Do you have a lot of friends, Corey?

Corey Brown: I have a few.

Detective Davis: So would you say Jane was one of your few friends?

Corey Brown: Yeah, I guess so.

Detective Adams: Would you say you were close friends? Like best friends?

Corey Brown: No, I wouldn't say we were close. Just friends, that's all.

Detective Adams: Oh, I figured you two were close, considering how upset Jane's parents said you were at her funeral.

Detective Davis: Why were you so upset Corey?

Corey Brown: It was really sad. She was one of my friends. She didn't deserve to die like that. It was just sad that's all.

Detective Adams: Die like what? What can you tell me about how she died?

Corey Brown: I just meant she didn't deserve to be hurt. She was a good person.

Detective Adams: So if she didn't deserve to die, then you understand why you need to help us catch her killer? That's why we asked you to talk to us.

Detective Davis: All we are trying to do, Corey, is get to the bottom of this, and we think you know a lot more than you are telling us. So why don't you just tell us what you know Corey?

Corey Brown: I've already told you everything I know.

Detective Adams: I think maybe there's more you can remember.

### **Wednesday, September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 10:30am**

Detective Adams: Ok, let's go back to the day that Jane went missing. Where were you that day? August 12, 2010?

Corey Brown: I was at school.

Detective Adams: What about after school? What did you do when school was over?

Corey Brown: I went home and played some video games with my cousin.

Detective Adams: Do you remember what time it was when you got home?

Corey Brown: I think 3:30.

Detective Adams: And do you remember how long you played video games with your cousin?

Corey Brown: About 2 hours.

Detective Adams: So until about 5:30? Is that correct?

Corey Brown: Yes, I think so.

Detective Adams: So what game were you playing?

Corey Brown: Call of Duty maybe.

Detective Adams: Is your cousin going to be able to back you up on this?

Corey Brown: Um I don't know. I guess so. You can ask him.

Detective Adams: Did you go anywhere else that evening, other than your house?

Corey Brown: No.

Detective Adams: So when you got home from school, you stayed there the rest of the night?

Corey Brown: Yes.

Detective Adams: And you're positive that you did not leave your house after getting home from school?

Corey Brown: Yes.

Detective Brown: If we talk to your mother, she can verify all this?

Corey Brown: Yeah, I guess so.

Detective Davis: Try to think harder, Corey. I know it was a while ago so it can be hard to remember everything you did that day, but we really need you to try. Are you sure you didn't do anything else that evening?

Corey Brown: No I just stayed at home.

Detective Davis: Ok Corey. I'll just cut to the chase. I asked to speak with you today because we have evidence that links you to Jane's murder.

Corey Brown: But I didn't do anything! I told you before she was my friend. I wouldn't do that to her!

Detective Adams: Okay, Corey, calm down. Everything is going to be okay, but you have to work with us, okay?

### **Wednesday September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2010 11:00am**

Detective Adams: We've been talking a while now Corey, and I think it's time for you to be honest. Please tell me exactly what happened, and we can be done here, you can go home. Can you do that Corey?

Corey Brown: I keep telling you I didn't do anything! I can't tell you what happened if I don't know what happened!

Detective Adams: Our records show that you were tardy to school the day after Jane went missing. Why were you tardy that day?

Corey Brown: I wasn't feeling well that morning, so I decided to stay home for a while until I felt better.

Detective Adams: Why didn't you feel well?

Corey Brown: I just didn't, I don't know.

Detective Adams: Are you sure you weren't feeling guilty about doing something you shouldn't have?

Corey Brown: No! I just didn't feel good that's all. Look, I didn't have anything to do with this! I've told you over and over! Why don't you believe me?

Detective Adams: There's no reason to get upset Corey, if you really didn't do anything.

Corey Brown: I promise you I didn't hurt her! I would never do that!

Detective Adams: Ok Corey. I'll level with you. We examined your locker at school and found lined paper that matches the paper a note found at the crime scene was written on. We have physical evidence linking you to the crime scene Corey. We know you're our guy, we just need you to tell us what happened. And this is how it's going to work; either you tell us what happened and let us help you or you continue to lie and make excuses and I tell the judge you wouldn't cooperate with us. Which do you want Corey?

Detective Davis: Here is what we think happened, Corey. We think you liked Jane a lot more than you are telling us and maybe you even wanted to date her. We think you saw her go into the woods that evening and you followed her to ask her out. And when she said no you kept persisting, but her answer didn't change and that's when you got mad. Maybe you grabbed her when she tried to get away and put your hand over her mouth, so she wouldn't scream. But maybe you grabbed her a little too hard and choked her. Maybe it was all an accident Corey.

Detective Adams: We don't think you did this on purpose Corey. We know you are a good kid. We think you just made a mistake, but you have to own up to that mistake now. It's time for you to tell the truth.

**Wednesday September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010 12:00pm**

Detective Adams: The fact of the matter is, Corey, all the evidence points to you being the guy who did this. It's only a matter of time before we get the DNA evidence that will confirm what we already know.

Corey Brown: I just don't understand why this is happening to me. I can't do this anymore, I just want this to be over!

Detective Davis: There is only one way to leave this all behind you, Corey. Just tell us what you did. We all know what you did, Corey, you just have to say it.

Corey: Okay.

Detective Adams: So let's get this straight, you had a crush on Jane and followed her into the woods that evening to ask her out. She refused, and you got angry and killed her. You strangled her and hit her head with something. Is that about right Corey?

Corey Brown: Yeah. Sure. Can I go home now?

Detective Davis: Tell us how it happened and this will be over.

Corey Brown: I followed Jane into the woods. I grabbed her and put my hand over her mouth. I must have held it there too long because she stopped breathing.

Detective Adams: And then what happened? What happened to her head?

Corey Brown: I hit it.

Detective Davis: What'd you hit it with?

Corey Brown: A rock.

Detective Adams: So you hit her with a rock.

Corey Brown: Yeah.

Detective Davis: Why did you do it, Corey?

Corey Brown: I don't know.

Detective Davis: Come on Corey, you need to tell us the truth here.

Corey Brown: I was mad because she wouldn't go out with me, I guess.

Detective Adams: Okay, Corey, we are going to get this statement typed up so that you can sign it for us.

Corey Brown: Okay.



APPENDIX D

POLICE REPORTS

*Accurate Report, Highly Coercive*

## Case Incident Report

### Winchester Police Department

Occurrence Date(s)		Date of Report	Incident Description	Complaint Number
09/02/2010		09/03/2010	Interview of Suspect	09_99999
Day of Week	Time	Officers Responsible for Case		Case Type
4	10:00 am-4:00 pm	Detective R. Adams Detective G. Davis		Homicide
				Winchester, Illinois Police Department

#### VICTIMS/ PERSONS

Name (Last, First)	DOB	Age	Address	Person Status
Smith, Jane	06/13/1994	16	12 Anywhere St. Winchester, IL	Victim
Name (Last, First)	DOB	Age	Address	Person Status
Brown, Corey	02/27/1994	16	343 Somewhere Rd. Winchester, IL	Suspect

#### Narrative

##### Interrogation of Suspect

Suspect, identified as Corey Brown, arrived at the Winchester Police Department Headquarters at approximately 09:45am on Wednesday September 10, 2010 for questioning. Questioning began at approximately 10:00 am in an interrogation room in the police department. Prior to questioning, Brown was made aware of his legal rights and asked if he voluntarily agreed to speak with us. Brown voluntarily agreed to engage in a conversation with us and interrogation began. In regard to his relation to the victim, Brown stated he and the victim were acquaintances and knew each other through school. Brown was then asked about his behavior at the victim's funeral and he stated that he was emotional because "she did not deserve to die like that" and that he found the whole situation to be disturbing. We asked what he meant by that statement and he began to attempt to retract his statement and divert the conversation. We told Brown we believed he was concealing information and reminded him of the importance of telling us everything he knew. We then attempted to ask Brown to tell us where he had been the day of the victim's disappearance. Brown stated he left school and went home where he played video games with his cousin through the evening. Brown did not provide any details pertaining to his alibi which we took as a sign of deceit. At this point we encouraged Brown to try to remember details of that evening so that we could obtain a better understanding of his alibi. Brown became clearly agitated and defensive and we attempted to calm him down by telling him as long as he was honest the situation would work itself out. We also began to encourage Brown to be honest and reminded him of the importance of being truthful in these situations and reminded him that we were there to help him not hurt him. Brown continued to display deceitful behavior and we began to present Brown with the evidence we had against him. We then presented Brown with physical evidence found that directly linked him to the crime scene as well as the fact he was tardy to school the day after the victim's murder. Brown, once again, became extremely defensive. We again attempted to calm Brown down and encouraged him once again to be honest with us and told him that if continued to lie to us that he would only be making things harder on himself. After presenting Brown with scenario we constructed based on evidence from the case, Brown confessed to following the victim into a wooded area and attempting to ask her on a date. Brown also confessed that when the victim refused he became angry and grabbed her

resulting in her strangulation. All confessions were voluntary and given while Brown was in a sound state of mind. Interrogation concluded at approximately 3:20pm.

### *Accurate Report, Slightly Coercive*

## Case Incident Report

### Winchester Police Department

Occurrence Date(s)		Date of Report	Incident Description	Complaint Number
09/02/2010		09/03/2010	Interview of Suspect	09_99999
Day of Week	Time	Officers Responsible for Case	Case Type	Location of Incident
4	10:00 am-12:00 pm	Detective R. Adams Detective G. Davis	Homicide	Winchester, Illinois Police Department

### VICTIMS/ PERSONS

Name (Last, First)	DOB	Age	Address	Person Status
Smith, Jane	06/13/1994	16	12 Anywhere St. Winchester, IL	Victim
Name (Last, First)	DOB	Age	Address	Person Status
Brown, Corey	02/27/1994	16	343 Somewhere Rd. Winchester, IL	Suspect

### Narrative

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*Inaccurate Report, Highly Coercive*

## Case Incident Report

### Winchester Police Department

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*Inaccurate Report, Slightly Coercive*

## Case Incident Report

### Winchester Police Department

Occurrence Date(s)		Date of Report	Incident Description	Complaint Number
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#### Narrative

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## APPENDIX E

### PERCEPTIONS QUESTIONNAIRES

\*Please choose only one choice for each question and attempt to answer every question to the best of your ability

**Attention Checks:**

1. How old was the victim in this case?  
11    12    13    14    15    16    17
2. What key piece of evidence was found at the crime scene in this case?
  - a. a cellphone
  - b. a note on lined paper
  - c. a man's baseball cap
3. How was the victim in this case killed?
  - a. Shot
  - b. Stabbed
  - c. Strangled
4. How did the defendant know the victim in this case?
  - a. Family member
  - b. Friend from school
  - c. Neighbor
5. What evidence did the detectives present against Corey? (Please check all that apply)
  - a. Fingerprint evidence
  - b. Prior history of violent behavior
  - c. Physical evidence found at the crime scene
  - d. Identification by an eyewitness
  - e. Prior history of aggressive behavior toward females
  - f. Friends stating Corey confessed to the crime
  - g. Being tardy to school the day after Jane's disappearance
6. What did Corey say he was doing the afternoon Jane went missing?
  - a. Playing basketball
  - b. Doing homework
  - c. Playing video games
  - d. Walking in the park near his house

### Open-ended Questions:

1. What did you think of the interrogation/ interview?
2. What did you think of Corey's confession?

### Verdict Judgement

1. What is your verdict in this case? Based on the information provided, would you find the suspect Guilty or Not Guilty of killing Jane Smith?

Guilty

Not Guilty

Why?

---

2. Please rate your confidence in your verdict decision:

Very Unconfident

Not Sure

Very Confident

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

3. Regardless of your legal verdict given above, do you think that the suspect murdered the victim?

Yes

No

4. Please list three things that helped you make your verdict decision?

5. Do you think the suspect should be tried as an adult or juvenile?

Adult

Juvenile

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

6. How likely is it that the confession given was false?

Very Unlikely

Neutral

Very Likely

1

2

3

4

5

6

7



7. If you said it was possible the confession given was false please list 3 possible reasons:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

8. Please rate your view of whether the confession true or false

Definitely True			Neutral		Definitely False	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### Interrogation Questions

1. How fair do you think the police questioning of the defendant was overall?

Very Unfair			Neutral		Very Fair	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. How manipulative do you think the detectives were during the questioning?

Very Manipulative			Neutral		Not Manipulative	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. How coercive do you think the questioning was overall?

Very Coercive			Neutral		Not Coercive	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. How much pressure do you think the detectives put on the suspect?

A Great Deal			Neutral		None	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. How appropriate were the questioning techniques used by the detectives given the suspect's age?

Very Appropriate

Neutral

Very Inappropriate

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

6. How much sympathy do you think the detectives displayed for the suspect?

A Great Deal

Neutral

None

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

7. How aggressive do you think the detectives were during the questioning?

Very Aggressive

Neutral

Not Aggressive

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

8. How professional were the detectives?

Very Likeable

Neutral

Not Likeable

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

9. How appropriate were the questioning techniques used by the detectives given the nature of the crime?

Very Appropriate

Neutral

Very Inappropriate

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

### **Confession Questions**

1. To what extent do you think the confession given was voluntary?

Not at all

Neutral

Completely

1      2      3      4      5      6      7

2. To what extent do you think the confession given was believable?

Not at all

Neutral

Completely



6. How likely is it that the defendant understood his right to remain silent?

Very Unlikely			Neutral		Very Likely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. How likely is it that the defendant understood that any statement or confession he gave could be used against him?

Very Unlikely			Neutral		Very Likely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. How likely is it that the defendant knew he could stop the interview anytime he wanted?

Very Unlikely			Neutral		Very Likely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**Police Report Questions (if report was provided)**

1. To what extent do you think the police report provided was believable?

Not at all			Neutral		Completely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. To what extent do you think the police report provided was accurate?

Not at all			Neutral		Completely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. To what extent do you think the police report provided was representative of the actual questioning of the suspect?

Not at all			Neutral		Completely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. To what extent did reading the police report influence your verdict decision?

Not at all			Neutral		A Great Deal	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### **Affective Reactions**

- Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements

1. "I feel sorry for the suspect"

Completely Disagree			Neutral			Completely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. "The detectives need to do whatever possible in order to obtain a confession"

Completely Disagree			Neutral			Completely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. "I have pity for the suspect"

Completely Disagree			Neutral			Completely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

4. "I have pity for the victim and her family"

Completely Disagree			Neutral			Completely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. "I have sympathy for the suspect"

Completely Disagree			Neutral			Completely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

6. "I have sympathy for the police"

Completely Disagree			Neutral			Completely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### **Police Perceptions Scale**

\*Please rate the extent to which you agree/ disagree with the following statements

1. Police do their best to be fair to everyone

- |  |                     |   |         |   |                  |
|--|---------------------|---|---------|---|------------------|
|  | Completely Disagree |   | Neutral |   | Completely Agree |
|  | 1                   | 2 | 3       | 4 | 5                |
|  |                     |   |         | 6 | 7                |
2. Police officers treat people with respect
 

	Completely Disagree		Neutral		Completely Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
				6	7
  3. People should trust the police to help
 

	Completely Disagree		Neutral		Completely Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
				6	7
  4. I believe what police officers tell me
 

	Completely Disagree		Neutral		Completely Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
				6	7
  5. Police officers desire justice
 

	Completely Disagree		Neutral		Completely Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
				6	7
  6. The police usually act in ways consistent with my ideas about what is right and wrong
 

	Completely Disagree		Neutral		Completely Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
				6	7

## Demographics

What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Male \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_ Prefer not to answer

Do you identify as Hispanic or Latino- A person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. Please select from the answers below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Hispanic Latino
- \_\_\_\_\_ Not Hispanic Latino
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Of the racial identities listed below, which best represents you?

- \_\_\_\_\_ White (Not Hispanic Latino)- A person having origins of the original people of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Black or African American (Not Hispanic Latino)- A person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.

- \_\_\_\_\_ American Indian or Alaska Native (not Hispanic Latino)- A person having origins in any of the original peoples of North and South America (including Central America), and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Asian (Not Hispanic Latino)- A person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or Indian subcontinent, including Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, and Vietnam.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (Not Hispanic Latino)- A person having origins in any of the peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Two or more races (Not Hispanic Latino)- All person who identify with more than one of the above five races.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Which best describes your political orientation?

\_\_\_\_\_ Conservative      \_\_\_\_\_ Moderate      \_\_\_\_\_ Liberal

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, highest degree received.

- \_\_\_\_\_ No high school
- \_\_\_\_\_ Some High school, no diploma
- \_\_\_\_\_ High school graduate, diploma or equivalent (GED)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Some college credit, no degree
- \_\_\_\_\_ Trade/ technical/ vocational training
- \_\_\_\_\_ Associate's degree
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bachelor's degree
- \_\_\_\_\_ Master's degree
- \_\_\_\_\_ Professional degree
- \_\_\_\_\_ Doctoral degree

Have you or anyone close to you (friend or family) ever been suspected of committing a crime?

Yes      No

Have you or anyone close to you ever been formally questioned by the police?

Yes                      No

Do you think you would ever confess to a crime you did not commit?

Yes                      No

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

In general, how much sympathy do you feel for juveniles who commit crimes?

A great deal              A lot              A moderate amount              A little              None at all



## APPENDIX F

### QUALITATIVE CODING SCHEME

## Qualitative Coding Scheme

- 1= Inaccurate confession
- 2= Confession= guilty
- 3= Lack of/ unsubstantial evidence
- 4= Evidence indicates guilty
- 5+= Personality indicates guilty
- 5-= Personality indicates not guilty
- 6= Innocent behavior
- 7= Guilty behavior
- 8= Coercive interrogation/ poor procedure
- 9= lack of understanding of right/ consequences
- 10= Confession due to fatigue/ reward sensitivity
- 11= Diminished capacity
- 12+= Age (old enough)
- 12-= Age (too young)
- 13= No lawyer/ parent present
- 14= Other
- 15= Suspect is competent
- 16= The confession was voluntary
- 17+= Alibi is flimsy/ indicates guilty
- 17-= Alibi strong/ indicates not guilty

## VITA

Morgan Nicole Andrews was born in Rome, GA, to the parents of Glenn and Regina Andrews. She is the first of two children, with a younger brother, Ryan. She attended West End Elementary and continued to Rome High School in Rome, Georgia. After graduation, Morgan attended Berry College where she studied Psychology. During her junior year, she became interested in Psychology and the Law. Morgan worked on a variety of research and grant projects as an undergraduate. She completed the Bachelor of Science degree in May 2017 in Psychology. After completing her Bachelors, Morgan accepted a graduate research assistantship at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga in the Research Psychology Program. During her graduate career, Morgan also worked as a trial consultant in which she consulted on several criminal and civil cases. Morgan graduated with a Master of Science degree in Psychology in May 2019.