**Lundon, Georgia (PS3-B)**

**Victim and Defendant Stereotypes in Alleged Child Sexual Abuse Closing Arguments**

Georgia M Lundon, Dr. Hayden M Henderson, Dr. Thomas D Lyon

University of Southern California

Since many cases of alleged child sexual abuse (CSA) lack physical evidence and/or corroborative witnesses (Bottoms, Golding, Stevenson, Wiley, & Yozwiak, 2007), the testimonies of victims and defendants are a primary source of evidence for jurors (Whitcomb, 1992). However, research has suggested that jurors are unable to accurately assess the veracity of children’s or adults’ testimonies, and that their credibility assessments are influenced by extra-legal factors (Goodman, Batterman-Faunce, Schaff, & Kenney, 2002), including stereotypes pertaining to CSA and victim-defendant characteristics (Lundon, Henderson, & Lamb, in prep).

The present study seeks to investigate the presence of victim and defendant stereotypes in CSA closing arguments by the defense and prosecution (*N* = 60) using a mixed-methods approach. A thematic analysis will investigate whether the construction of narratives pertaining to stereotypes differs depending on the attorney’s position (defense/prosecution) and whether these are contingent upon children’s ages and victim-defendant relationships. Narrative analyses will explore the extent to which themes are used differentially and in combination as a function of case characteristics. Quantitative analyses will explore whether the presence of stereotyping themes can predict acquittals in these cases, independent of summarized case evidence. We anticipate that defense attorneys will make use of stereotypes about CSA and victim-defendant characteristics most frequently, and that narrative techniques will differ dependent on child age and victim-defendant relationship.

Findings will be discussed in relation to recognizing and protecting against the reinforcement of stereotypes that may negatively impact jury decision-making and public discourse surrounding CSA.

Keywords: child sexual abuse, closing argument, stereotypes, jury decision-making