

Perception of Child Abuse by Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Marital Status

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O G L E T H O R P E

U N I V E R S I T Y

Abstract

Both child abuse and prejudice remain problems within American society. This 2 x 2 x 2 between-subject factorial ANOVA study sought to better understand how race (Black/White), socioeconomic status (SES) (high/low), and parental marital status (married/single) can cause prejudice in the perception of alleged child abuse. Participants read vignettes detailing an alleged child abuse case. Then, participants rated their perception of the mother, the child, and the believability of the allegations. They also rated how invasive CPS's response should be in the situation. Results suggest that allegations against White mothers were more strongly believed, and White mothers were seen more negatively. White children were expected to be more impacted by the abuse. There was an interaction between SES and marital status for the view of the mother and the CPS action endorsed, such that more invasive action was recommended when the mother was single and high-SES, but not when the mother was single and low-SES. Effect sizes were too small to determine the pattern for the interaction on the perception of the mother. This study was limited by its constrained range for the independent variables. Future research should further explore how attributes of the child affect how they are perceived in child abuse cases. Better understanding this can help better identify which children are at risk of being under-protected by services such as CPS.

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Child abuse is not rare in American homes. In 2018, the most recent year for which data is available, 678,000 children were abused or neglected in America (U.S. Dept. Health and Human Services: Children's Bureau [Children's Bureau], 2020). Of these, 120,277 were physically or sexually abused, and an additional 105,322 children experienced multiple types of abuse or neglect (Children's Bureau, 2020). Another unfortunate, but common, problem in American society is discrimination. Discrimination is rooted in stereotypes: generalizations about groups. These generalizations can be negative, positive, neutral, or a combination of these attitudes (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). When stereotypes are predominantly negative, it can be said there is a bias against, or prejudice about, the group the stereotype defines. Prejudice leads to discrimination when it causes people to alter their behavior towards an individual or group due to prejudice towards that individual or group (Weeks & Lupfer, 2004). This study seeks to better understand how race, socioeconomic status (SES) and marital status cause prejudice in the perception of child abuse.

Child Protective Services (CPS) data are a useful source for investigating disproportionate representation of demographics in child abuse cases. A variety of factors have been studied as potential areas of discrimination within the CPS system. Research has found that county-specific demographics such as racial groupings, income-level, and prevalence of single-parent households all influence the rate at which CPS investigations are substantiated and the likelihood of removing affected children from their homes (Maguire-Jack, Font, & Dillard, 2019).

Disproportionate representation of families of minority racial backgrounds has been well studied in the CPS system. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services,

Black children represent 20.6% of neglect and abuse cases despite Black Americans comprising only 13.7% of the American population (Children's Bureau, 2020). Accounting for racial demographics across counties and differences in reporting systems reduces, but does not remove, this discrepancy (Ards, Myers, Malkis, Sugrue, & Zhou, 2003). In addition to being more frequently identified as victims of abuse, Black children in child abuse cases are also more frequently removed from their homes. In some areas, Black children are removed from their parents' care and placed into protective custody at three times the rate of White children (Wulczyn, Gibbons, Snowden, & Lery, 2013). Though disproportionate representation does not equate to discrimination, it is important to closely examine why such disproportions exist to ensure equal and fair treatment.

It has been theorized that risk-factors for child abuse and neglect, such as single-parenting and low-SES, that disproportionately affect minority homes could explain the increased rates of CPS involvement in these homes (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2020). In America, Black households are more than twice as likely to be single-parent households (54%) than White households (19%) (Pew Research Center, 2015). According to the USA Census Bureau report on poverty, Black individuals are also more than twice as likely to be living in poverty (20%) than White individuals (8%) (2018). When evaluating the impact of race on the perception of child abuse, it is important to also include marital status and SES, as these two variables are unevenly distributed across racial demographics and may be the true cause of some over-representation.

Research on the impact of race in child abuse cases that controls for the influence of factors such as SES, has mixed results. One study found that Black children were still 44% more likely to be removed from their homes than White children even when accounting for risk factors

such as SES (Knott & Donovan, 2010). Additionally, Black children receive fewer services from CPS than White children and are assigned fewer volunteer representatives by judges than White children, even when accounting for SES (Osborne, Warner-Doe, & Lawson, 2019; Stahmer et al., 2005). Another study found that, after accounting for risk-factors, there was no difference in CPS case outcomes for children of different races. However, the study also found that when Black investigators evaluated Black children, they rated them as experiencing greater risk and more often substantiated the alleged abuse than when evaluating White children. That these workers considered these children to be at greater risk, but yet did not recommend more extensive interventions, shows that race may still be a factor in CPS cases even when outcomes appear similar (Font, Berger, & Slack, 2012).

Child abuse is a crime, and prejudice against persons of color within the criminal justice system has been well documented. A meta-analysis on mock-juror decision making found a consistent bias against Black defendants, meaning Black persons accused of crimes were seen more negatively than White persons accused of crimes (Mitchell, Haw, Pfeifer, & Meissner, 2005). Though, to the author's knowledge, there have not been studies that generalize these finding specifically to cases of alleged child abuse, such mock-juror studies may indicate that Black parents accused of abusing their children may be judged more negatively than White parents.

Low-SES status is a risk factor for child abuse investigations across the country, to the extent that half of urban children removed from their homes after a child abuse or neglect investigation come from low-SES homes (Barth, Wildfire & Green 2006). Though low-SES status has been identified as a risk-factor for child abuse and neglect, bias against low-SES families could still occur (CDC, 2020). Biases about SES, including prejudice against those who

are low-SES, is common around the world. Even Sweden, a country known for SES equality programs which are widely supported by its general population, is not exempt from such prejudice. Poor members of Swedish society are seen as less competent than wealthier members, as well as less socially apt (Lindqvist, Björklund, & Bäckström 2017). In countries with a much larger wealth gap, such as America, low-SES stereotypes such as people from low-SES homes being irresponsible or unintelligent are especially strong and can even be detected among elementary and middle-school aged children (Woods, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2005).

One study investigated the impact of tax-credits given as cash to low-income single-parent households to support a causal link between income level and child abuse and neglect (Berger, Font, Slack, & Waldfogel, 2017). The study's results did not support a causal link between income and child abuse, though some evidence supported a causal link between income and child neglect. If there is no causal link between income level and child abuse, it increases the probability that the link is caused through other things such as prejudice. However, the researchers stressed that their results focused on a very specific population and may not be generalizable. More research is needed to determine how SES and child abuse are related to one another.

The above studies on CPS cases are all based on correlational and other non-experimental data. The lack of experimental research in this area is startling, as experimental approaches to prejudice based on key variables such as race and SES have been conducted in other contexts for decades (Cole, 2009; Smedley & Bayton, 1978; Weeks & Lupfer, 2004). These studies have shown the importance of an experimental method supplementing correlational research, as interactions have been commonly found. Back in 1978, researchers found an interaction between race and SES such that, while Black participants generally made stereotypes based on race over

SES, White participants generally made stereotypes based on SES over race (Smedley & Bayton, 1978). More recent research has supported that considering both SES and race in stereotype research remains important. Weeks and Lupfer (2004) found an interaction between SES and race, such that low-SES individuals were judged predominantly by race, and middle class individuals were judged predominantly by their middle-class SES. Main effects of both race and SES were less consistent.

Single-parent households are another key factor in CPS cases. Stereotypes associated with marital status have been reviewed through a meta-analysis (Valiquette-Tessier, Vandette, & Gosselin; 2016). This meta-analysis was the first done on the subject in twenty-six years, and it found that first-marriage married couples were still regarded as the standard family structure by Americans, and other family structures, such as adoptive, step, divorced, and single parents were compared to that image. Single parents were considered less apt parents than married parents, and within single parents, single mothers were stereotyped more strictly and negatively than single fathers. Single mothers, both those who had never married and those who were divorced, were considered less intelligent, less moral, less reputable, and worse parents than single fathers. Single fathers themselves were also seen as worse parents than first-marriage fathers. The researchers proposed that this gender difference was due to motherhood being more strictly stereotyped than fatherhood, leading to harsher reactions to attributes or actions considered to be incongruent with the stereotype (Valiquette-Tessier, et al 2016). This is consistent with previous correlational findings that disproportionate CPS involvement within low-SES homes was more pronounced for single-parent mothers than other family structures (Berger, Font, Slack, & Waldfogel 2017).

Another valuable source of data regarding how child abuse is perceived comes from the medical field. As doctors are mandated to report suspected child abuse, what factors contribute to them suspecting abuse as the cause for injuries they treat has been researched. The existence of stereotypes within the medical community based on race for child abuse cases is strongly supported in the literature, but if and how these stereotypes lead to discriminatory behavior is less clear (Najdowski & Bernstein, 2018).

In one study, researchers asked medical professionals to describe stereotypes about child abuse in low-SES families or in Black families (Najdowski & Bernstein, 2018). The medical professionals were asked to list words that society associated with one of the groups, regardless of if they personally agreed that the stereotyped words were accurate descriptors. The researchers found negative stereotypes for both low-SES and Black families when considering child abuse. They also found that half of the words for each category (Black and low-SES) overlapped, which is particularly interesting as each participant only shared words for one stereotype or the other, not both (Najdowski & Bernstein 2018). One of the words associated with both Black stereotypes and low-SES stereotypes was “unmarried”. Though this is an anecdotal finding, it bears exploring within the context of child abuse cases in combination with both race and SES, as coming from a single parent home is a risk-factor for child abuse (CDC, 2020).

In an experiment that tested for racial prejudice in doctors’ suspicion of child abuse, the participants (all of whom were doctors) read vignettes based on actual cases of child injury, with race of the child varied, and said if they suspected child abuse as the cause of injury (Rojas, Walker-Descartes, & Laraque-Arena, 2017). The researchers found no effect of race, but the cases given to the doctors were poorly standardized, which could have clouded the results. Family information and medical history varied, as did the injuries sustained. It is worth noting

that in the study, the one vignette that came close to supporting a bias against Black children (though the effect was non-significant with $p = .06$) was also the only vignette that disclosed the marital status of the mother, which was an unmarried relationship to the baby's father. Though this is anecdotal, combined with the anecdotal evidence found by Najdowski and Bernstein (2018), this shows the need for a standardized evaluation of how race and marital status are viewed together in the context of child abuse.

In a non-experimental study that investigated potential racial prejudice in the perception of child abuse cases, researchers looked at children under the age of three taken to various hospitals for acute head traumas (Hymel et al., 2018). This injury was chosen as the focus of the study as the most frequently lethal form of child abuse is acute head trauma (Scribano, Makoroff, Feldman & Berger, 2013). Researchers evaluated the race of the children, the rate at which the children were reported as suspected abuse victims, and which of the children were shown to actually be abuse victims upon further investigation (Hymel et al., 2018). The correlational results suggest that children of color were significantly more likely to be reported as suspected abuse victims than White children, with the disparity being largest for Hispanic and Black children compared to White children. Though the results were significant overall, closer analysis revealed that the effect was only at 2 of the 18 hospitals considered. The study did not find any significant differences between these 2 sites and the other 16 and concluded that further research was needed to fully evaluate the finding that minority children were more likely to be reported as abuse victims (Hymel et. al., 2018).

In a similar, but experimental study, designed to detect racial and SES prejudice in child abuse cases, over two thousand pediatricians were randomly sampled using a database of all licensed and practicing pediatricians in the United States (Laskey, Stump, Perkins, Zimet,

Sherman, & Downs, 2012). All read one of four vignettes. Each vignette detailed the same injury, one with a vague cause that could be reasonably attributed to either abusive or non-abusive causes in the perception of a medical professional. The vignettes the doctors read also specified the child's race (Black/White) and SES (low/high). The doctors were then asked to rate how likely they thought it was that the injury has been caused by abuse. The researchers did not find that suspicion of abuse was significantly impacted by race, but identified a significant effect for SES, such that children with lower levels of SES were more likely to be suspected to be abuse victims than children from higher SES families (Laskey et al., 2012). Again, the negative racial stereotypes recognized in the medical community did not appear to result in discriminatory behavior (Najdowski & Bernstein, 2018). However, there are many other people involved in child abuse cases other than medical professionals, more research should be conducted to see if these findings generalize to other groups.

Racial disproportionality and negative stereotypes have been demonstrated to exist within child abuse cases, and though most research has not detected racial prejudice, some studies have inconsistent results. None of the experimental studies examined race at the same time as both SES and marital status, and the inclusion of these may reveal interactions. There is support for a bias against low-SES and anecdotal evidence suggesting marital status should be further investigated. A study is needed that takes an intersectional approach and analyses all of these factors together (Cole, 2009).

This study strove to fill this gap, by simultaneously examining perception of racial, SES, and marital differences in child abuse cases in a vignette experimental method. Measurements will be taken of how the participants view both the accused parent (in this case, the mother), and the child, as well as how strongly they believe abuse occurred and what level of CPS

involvement is appropriate. The study carefully standardized the vignettes and controlled for other variables such as gender and age of both the parent and child, something lacking in several other studies. This allowed for a clearer picture of how SES, race, and marital status impact the perception of child abuse.

Significant main effects of race for each of the dependent variables were predicted, such that the Black mother would be seen more negatively, the abuse allegations would be seen as more credible, the Black child would be seen as more impacted by the alleged abuse, and more invasive CPS action would be endorsed than for White families. Though the degree to which race influences the perception of child abuse apart from known risk-factors remains unclear, research on the influence of race on those accused of crimes in general consistently finds Black persons are judged more negatively (Laskey et al., 2012; Mitchell, Haw, Pfeifer, & Meissner, 2005).

Significant main effects of marital status for each of the dependent variables were predicted, such that the single mother would be seen more negatively, the abuse allegations would be seen as more credible, her child would be seen as more impacted by the alleged abuse, and more invasive CPS action would be endorsed than for families with a married mother. This would be consistent with results found in previous research that single mothers are seen as less adequate than married mothers (Valiquette-Tessier, Vandette, & Gosselin; 2016).

Significant main effects of SES for each of the dependent variables were predicted, such that the mother with low-SES would be seen more negatively, the abuse allegations would be seen as more credible, her child would be seen as more impacted by the alleged abuse, and more invasive CPS action would be endorsed than for families with a married mother. This would be

consistent with results found in previous research that found that families with low-SES are seen more negatively in child abuse situations than high-SES families (Laskey et al., 2012).

A two-way race by SES interaction was predicted such that the negative effect of low-SES would have a larger negative effect for the Black parents than the White parents. This is consistent with past research that found that race was a more salient issue for low-SES persons than higher-SES persons (Weeks & Lupfer 2004).

Though the inclusion of marital status as a variable is warranted due to single parent household being a known risk factor for child abuse, and anecdotal evidence in other research, there is not enough extant literature to make a specific prediction of interactions, including any potential three-way interactions, involving marital status (CDC, 2020; Najdowski & Bernstein 2018; Rojas, Walker-Descartes, & Laraque-Arena, 2017).

Method

Participants

A total of 160 people participated in the experiment and were randomly assigned to conditions. The participants were predominantly undergraduate students of a liberal arts university in the southern United States. The mean age of participants was 20.22 years old, with a standard deviation of 2.19 years. The youngest participants were 18 years old, and the oldest participant was 37. The racial makeup of the participant group was 20.00% Black, 54.00% White, 12.50% Hispanic, 2.50% Asian/Pacific Islander, 10.00% were multiracial, and 0.60% ($n = 1$) identified as “other.” Regarding gender, the sample was 26.90% male, 70.00% female, 2.50% were transgender, and 0.60% ($n = 1$) identified as “other.” After participating, those who were enrolled in psychology courses and select other courses taught by a communications faculty member were given extra credit in exchange for their participation.

Participants ($n = 160$) were asked to disclose their personal experience with factors relevant to the study. When asked if poverty personally affected them during their childhood, 29.40% of participants indicated yes, 70.00% indicated no, and 0.60% ($n = 1$) declined to answer. Being raised by a single parent was reported by 15.00% of participants and 84.50% reported not being raised by single parents. A further 3.10% ($n = 5$) either declined to answer or provided unclear information. Participants were asked if they had experienced a variety of childhood traumas. Traumatic sexual experiences were reported by 20.10% of participants, with 79.90% reporting no such experience and 0.60% ($n = 1$) declining to answer. Traumatic non-sexual experiences with violence was reported by 18.10% of participants, and the remaining 81.90% reported no such experiences.

Materials

A consent form which alerted the participants that the study would potentially expose them to a report of alleged child abuse and may ask about their personal childhood traumatic experiences was given to each participant to sign (see Appendix A).

Two photos from the Chicago Face Database, one of a White woman and one of a Black woman, were used as mugshots. The faces were matched for attractiveness, age, and trustworthiness (see Appendix B) (Ma, Correll, & Wittenbrink 2015).

Vignettes were used to depict the initial investigation into an alleged case of parent to child abuse and the arrest of the parents (see Appendix C). The vignettes were presented as police reports to make inclusion of demographical information less suspicious. A graduate law student was consulted to ensure verisimilitude of the vignettes with typical police reports. The relationship between the alleged abuser and victim was parent to child in the vignette to increase

external validity, as 91.70% of perpetrators of child maltreatment are the parents of the child (Children's Bureau, 2020).

A questionnaire, Questionnaire on Mother (QOM), was designed to capture the general perception of the mother using parental-stereotype words identified by Troilo and Coleman (2008) (see Appendix D). Participants were shown thirteen pairs of opposing adjectives about the mother (nurturing/neglectful). In between the opposing adjectives was a scale from 1 to 7. Participants were asked to circle one of the numbers and were told that the closer the number they chose was to a word, the more strongly they felt that word described the mother in the police report.

A questionnaire, Questionnaire on Child (QOC), was designed to evaluate the perception of the child based on stereotypes of abuse victims (see Appendix E). The questionnaire used stereotypes identified by Zafar and Ross (2013). Their scale was developed to be a self-report measure that looked at emotional reaction to and assumptions made about childhood sexual abuse survivors. Nine items which were not specifically tied to the sexual nature of the abuse were compiled to evaluate the perception of the child survivors of non-sexual physical abuse for this present study. These aspects were posed as statements such as "this child will have low self-esteem" and participants were asked to indicate how strongly they endorsed those statements on a scale of 1 (highly unlikely) to 7 (highly likely).

A questionnaire, Abuse Belief Questionnaire (ABQ), was a five-item scale designed to determine how much participants believed the mother was abusive to her child. The scale asked participants to rate from 1 (highly unlikely) to 7 (highly likely) the likeness that statements such as "this child's bruises were due to abuse from his mother" were true (see Appendix F).

The Childhood Trauma Events Scale (CTES) (Pennebaker & Susman, 2013) was a six-item scale which was used to measure participants' experiences with childhood abuse and other traumatic childhood experiences (see Appendix H). The scale asked for participants to answer yes/no to various childhood traumas such as, "Prior to the age of 17, were you the victim of violence (child abuse, mugged or assaulted -- other than sexual)?" If the participant answered yes, the scale asked them to disclose the age at which the trauma occurred. As further follow-up, participants were asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 7 (extremely traumatic) how traumatic the event was, and also on a scale of 1 to 7 (a great deal) how much they had confided in others about the traumatic experience.

A one-item scale was used to determine how invasive participants would recommend CPS be in the situation (see Appendix G). The scale ranged from 1 (non-invasive: no action needed) to 4 (extremely invasive: remove child from home and place into foster system with goal of child being adopted into another home).

A demographics form was also used, which included questions about the participants' childhood SES and whether or not they were raised by a single parent (see Appendix E).

Design

The study was a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial ANOVA design. The independent variables were mother's race (White/Black), SES (low-SES/high-SES), and marital status (single/married). The first dependent variable was the perception of the allegedly abusive mother, measured through general positive/negative perception of the mother. The second dependent variable was how impacted the participant felt that the child would be by the abuse. The third dependent variable was how much the participant believed that the mother abused her

child. The fourth dependent variable was the degree of invasiveness of CPS action the participant felt was appropriate.

Gender and age of both the child and mother were control variables and did not vary across conditions. The physical attractiveness and trustworthiness of appearance of the mother were also controlled variables.

Procedure

Participants participated individually in a quiet and private location. Participants were told the study was on people's perception of police reports but were not told that the purpose of the study was to investigate allegations of child abuse specifically. After providing consent, participants were randomly assigned one of eight vignettes to read. After reading a vignette, the participants were asked to complete the various questionnaires about their perception of the alleged child abuse situation described in the vignette (Troilo & Coleman 2008; Zafar & Ross 2013). Participants then completed the Childhood Traumatic Events Scale (Pennebaker & Susman 2013). Then, participants were asked to complete a demographics form and were debriefed about the specific purpose and independent variables of the study.

Results

Scoring and Reliability

The QOM was scored by reverse scoring items 2, 7, 8, and 9. The scores were then averaged, with higher scores representing a stronger endorsement of negative parent stereotyped words. Cronbach $\alpha = .86$ for the QOM, with an inter-item correlation of .35. The correlations between individual items ranged from -.03 to .84.

The QOC was scored by reverse scoring items 2, 4, 7, 8, and 9. The scores were then averaged, with higher scores representing a stronger endorsement of negative abuse survivor

stereotyped words. Cronbach $\alpha = .73$ for the QOC, with an inter-item correlation of .24. The correlations between individual items ranged from -.01 to .48.

The ABQ was scored by averaging all of the items, with higher scores indicating a stronger endorsement of the variability of the abuse claims. Cronbach $\alpha = .89$ for ABQ, with an inter-item correlation of .63. The correlations between individual items ranged from .52 to .76.

The CTES was scored for item 3 (traumatic sexual experiences) and item 4 (violent experiences). The scores given for the degree of each trauma for CTES 3 and CTES 4 were summed to create a physical abuse score, such that higher scores indicated more trauma experiences as a result of childhood abuse.

Correlations

Pearson correlations were used to estimate the point-biserial correlations between the dependent variables and participant reported child abuse, and Pearson correlations were used to estimate the point bi-serial correlations between the dependent variables and participant reports of being raised by a single parent or experiencing childhood poverty (see Table 1). There were no significant correlational relationships between the dependent variables and the participant variables considered, which were if they were raised by a single parent, if they experienced childhood poverty, or if they reported being abused as children ($ps > .05$). When reported childhood abuse was divided into sexual and non-sexual abuse, there were still no significant correlations found between either type of abuse and any of the dependent variables ($ps > .05$).

The correlations between these participant variables were also evaluated. Pearson correlations were used to estimate the point bi-serial correlations between participant demographics of single parent households, poverty, and experiences of childhood abuse. There was a significant correlation between being raised by a single parent and experiencing childhood

abuse, such that those who reported being raised by a single parent reported more trauma due to childhood abuse $r(155) = -.25, p = .002$. There was a significant correlation between living in poverty in childhood and experiencing child abuse, such that those who reported living in poverty reported more trauma due to childhood abuse $r(159) = -.23, p = .004$. There was also a significant correlation between living in a single parent home and living in poverty, such that those who reported living in poverty were more likely to also report being raised by a single parent $r(154) = .31, p < .001$ (See Table 1).

Pearson correlations between the dependent variables were all significant (see Table 1). QOM was significantly correlated with QOC, $r(160) = .42, p < .001$, ABQ, $r(160) = .74, p < .001$, and CPS, $r(160) = .42, p < .001$. As the mothers were seen more negatively, the child was expected to be more impacted by abuse, the abuse was seen as more veritable, and a higher level of CPS intervention was endorsed. QOC was also significantly correlated with ABQ, $r(160) = .49, p < .001$, and CPS, $r(160) = .24, p = .003$. As the child was expected to be more impacted by abuse, the abuse was seen as more veritable and a higher level of CPS intervention was endorsed. ABQ and CPS were also significantly correlated, $r(160) = .49, p < .001$, such that as the abuse was seen as more veritable, a higher level of CPS intervention was endorsed.

Factorial ANOVAs

A 2 (race: White and Black) x 2 (SES: low and high) x 2 (marital status: married and single) between-subjects factorial ANOVA was conducted to test for the effects of race, SES, and marital status on the QOM dependent variable. There was a significant main effect of race on the QOM, such that the mothers were seen more negatively when they were White ($M = 5.45, SD = 0.77$) than when they were Black ($M = 5.13, SD = 0.88$), $F(1,152) = 7.07, p = .009, \eta^2 = .044$. There was no significant main effect of SES on QOM, $F(1,152) = 0.04, p = .84, \eta^2 = .000$.

There was no significant main effect of marital status on QOM, $F(1,152) = 0.296, p = .59, \eta^2 = .002$ (see Table 2 for all means and standard deviations).

There was a significant SES x marital status interaction for QOM, $F(1,152) = 4.28, p = .04, \eta^2 = .027$, such that the conditions were significantly different from one another. However, simple effects test found that none of the conditions were significantly different from the null.

There was no significant SES x race interaction for QOM, $F(1,152) = 0.44, p = .51, \eta^2 = .003$.

There was no significant marital status x race interaction for QOM, $F(1,152) = 0.02, p = .89, \eta^2 = .00$ (see Table 3 for all means and standard deviations). There was no significant SES x race x marital status interaction for QOM, $F(1,152) = 0.79, p = .38, \eta^2 = .005$ (see Table 4 for all means and standard deviations).

A 2 (race: White and Black) x 2 (SES: low and high) x 2 (marital status: married and single) between-subjects factorial ANOVA was conducted to test for the effects of race, SES, and marital status on the QOC dependent variable. There was a significant main effect of race on the QOC, such that the child was projected to have a less-positive future when they were White ($M = 5.12, SD = 0.72$) than when they were Black ($M = 4.87, SD = 0.64$), $F(1,152) = 4.78, p = .03, \eta^2 = .043$. There was no significant main effect of SES on QOC, $F(1,152) = 0.001, p = .975, \eta^2 = .000$. There was no significant main effect of marital status on QOC, $F(1,152) = 0.02, p = .889, \eta^2 = .000$ (see Table 2 for all means and standard deviations).

There was no significant SES x marital status interaction for QOC, $F(1,152) = 0.60, p = .44, \eta^2 = .004$. There was no significant SES x race interaction for QOC, $F(1,152) = 0.33, p = .57, \eta^2 = .002$. There was no significant marital status x race interaction for QOC, $F(1,152) = 0.02, p = .89, \eta^2 = .00$ (see Table 3 for all means and standard deviations). There was no

significant SES x race x marital status interaction for QOC, $F(1,152) = 1.86, p = .175, \eta^2 = .012$ (see Table 4 for all means and standard deviations).

A 2 (race: White and Black) x 2 (SES: low and high) x 2 (marital status: married and single) between-subjects factorial ANOVA was conducted to test for the effects of race, SES, and marital status on the ABQ dependent variable. There was a significant main effect of race on the ABQ, such that the abuse was seen as more veritable when family was White ($M = 5.93, SD = 0.80$) than when the family was Black ($M = 5.31, SD = 1.12$), $F(1,152) = 16.74, p < .001, \eta^2 = .099$. There was no significant main effect of SES on ABQ, $F(1,152) = 0.37, p = .54, \eta^2 = .002$. There was no significant main effect of marital status on ABQ, $F(1,152) = 0.26, p = .61, \eta^2 = .002$ (see Table 2 for all means and standard deviations).

There was no significant SES x marital status interaction for ABQ, $F(1,152) = 2.04, p = .16, \eta^2 = .013$. There was no significant SES x race interaction for ABQ, $F(1,152) = 0.04, p = .89, \eta^2 = .000$. There was no significant marital status x race interaction for ABQ, $F(1,152) = 0.00, p = .98, \eta^2 = .00$ (see Table 3 for all means and standard deviations). There was no significant SES x race x marital status interaction for ABQ, $F(1,152) = 0.93, p = .34, \eta^2 = .006$ (see Table 4 for all means and standard deviations).

A 2 (race: White and Black) x 2 (SES: low and high) x 2 (marital status: married and single) between-subjects factorial ANOVA was conducted to test for the effects of race, SES, and marital status on the CPS dependent variable. There was no significant main effect of race on the CPS, $F(1,152) = 1.78, p = .19, \eta^2 = .012$. There was no significant main effect of SES on CPS, $F(1,152) = 0.01, p = .92, \eta^2 = .000$. There was no significant main effect of marital status on CPS, $F(1,152) = 1.38, p = .24, \eta^2 = .009$ (see Table 2 for all means and standard deviations).

There was a significant SES x marital status interaction for CPS, $F(1,152) = 5.97, p = .016, \eta^2 = .038$. Simple effects testing showed that the degree of invasiveness of CPS action was not affected by the mother's marital status when she was low-SES, but it was affected by marital status when the mother was high-SES, such that more invasive CPS action was endorsed when the mother was single ($M = 3.11, SD = 0.11$) than when she was married ($M = 2.71, SD = 0.12$) (see Figure 2). There was no significant SES x race interaction for CPS, $F(1,152) = 0.59, p = .44, \eta^2 = .004$. There was no significant marital status x race interaction for CPS, $F(1,152) = 0.00, p = .96, \eta^2 = .00$ (see Table 3 for all means and standard deviations). There was no significant SES x race x marital status interaction for CPS, $F(1,152) = 0.37, p = .55, \eta^2 = .002$ (see Table 4 for all means and standard deviations).



Discussion

In general, the hypotheses were not supported. However, the data do support that race, SES, and marital status influence the perception of child abuse cases as there were main effects of race for all but one dependent variable, and interactions between SES and marital status for two dependent variables.

It was predicted that Black mothers would be seen more negatively than White mothers, but opposite results were found. White mothers were seen more negatively and the abuse allegations against them were seen as more veritable than those against Black mothers. This is inconsistent with research which has found persons accused of crimes are seen more negatively if they are Black (Mitchell, Haw, Pfeifer, & Meissner, 2005). However, it would be presumptuous to conclude that this study supports that a bias exists against White mothers, there are several potential alternative explanations.

First, it is possible that White mothers were judged more harshly because they were incongruent with stereotypes. Past studies have found evidence that the stronger a stereotype is, the more people judge those who break them (Klein & Cooper, 2017; Valiquette-Tessier, et al 2016). This would be consistent with the known stereotypes against Black mothers in child abuse cases, as the Black mothers accused of abusing their child were not breaking stereotypes, while the accused White mothers were breaking stereotypes (Najdowski & Bernstein, 2018). Second, it is possible that the Black mothers were judged less harshly due to participants, aware of the negative stereotypes against Black mothers, being hesitant to strongly condemn those mothers based on the limited information provided in the mock police report. This effort could have been made due to social desirability pressures or could have been based on habitual cognitive processes used by participants to avoid acting in discriminatory ways.

Of note, there was no difference in the degree of invasiveness of CPS action endorsed by participants depending on the family's race. Though this may support the idea that racial prejudice exists but does not result in discriminatory behavior, the participants were not professionally involved in handling child abuse cases, so their responses may not generalize to trained CPS professionals.

It was predicted that Black children would be perceived as having a more negative outcome after experiencing abuse than White children, but the opposite effect was found. White children who were alleged victims of child abuse were seen as more likely to be negatively impacted by the abuse than Black children. This may be due to the allegations made against the White mothers being more strongly believed than the allegations against the Black mother. If this is the case, the White children may be expected to be more impacted because it is believed it is more likely that they were actually abused. The effect size for this pattern was medium sized,

however, the means for both groups were above the mid-point, indicating that the abuse was generally believed to have occurred for White and Black children (see Table 2). This makes it less likely that the differences were due to a difference in how much the abuse was believed to have occurred. It is possible that negative stereotypes about Black boys, such that they prone to violence and unintelligent, may have led to them being perceived as less-impacted by the abuse (Priest, et al., 2018).

It was predicted that mothers of low-SES would be seen more negatively, the allegations made against them would be more strongly believed, and more invasive CPS action would be endorsed when they were accused of child abuse compared to mothers with high-SES. None of these predictions were supported in the data. This is not consistent with research that found that doctors were more likely to believe an injury had been caused by abuse when the family was low-SES than when the family was high-SES (Laskey et al., 2012). The differing results may be due to the greater degree of vagueness in the cases the doctor's reviewed, compared to this study where abuse was explicitly reported and confirmed by the child themselves. It is unlikely that the results of the present study were due to inadequate manipulation of the variable, as an interaction was detected between this variable and marital status which impacted the perception of the mother and the invasiveness of CPS action endorsed.

This interaction between SES and marital status may explain the lack of main effects for these variables for endorsed CPS action. Past experimental research in this area has not included both SES and marital status, and the influence of marital status may explain why the results are inconsistent with that research (Laskey et al., 2012). However, this interaction was not detected for the degree to which the allegations were believed, so cannot account for the lack of main effects in this area. The fact that an interaction was found for CPS action and not for the believe

in the allegations, is concerning, as it shows that more invasive CPS action was recommended even when participants believed to the same degree that the mothers had committed the alleged abuse.

The effect sizes for the interaction between SES and marital status on the perception of the mother were too small to determine the pattern of the interaction. Though the means reflect the same pattern seen in the CPS interaction, further research would need to be conducted to confirm the pattern of this interaction.

The interaction for SES and marital status for the degree of invasiveness of CPS action endorsed by participants was such that marital status had no influence unless the mother had high-SES. When she was high-SES, more invasive action was recommended when the mother was single than when she was married. This interaction supports interpreting the results of this study as supporting the idea that people responded most strongly to situations that broke stereotypes. Low-SES and single status are closely intertwined, as over one in three single mothers live in poverty (Misra, Moller, Strader, & Wemlinger, 2011). Single yet high-SES mothers broke this stereotype, and this may have been why they elicited a stronger negative response from participants. However, mothers who were married and low-SES also broke this stereotype but were not regarded differently by the participants. Though this could be due to a lack of statistical power, it still weakens this interpretation. Nevertheless, this interaction highlights the importance of including marital status as a variable in research of child abuse cases.

Though there was a predicted main effect of marital status based on past research revealing negative stereotypes about single mothers, there was no prediction for interactions including marital status, due to an insufficient literature base (Valiquette-Tessier, Vandette, &

Gosselin, 2016). No main effect of marital status was detected. The past research on marital status stereotypes were not conducted within the context of child abuse allegations, and it is possible that the stereotypes do not generalize to this context.

No interaction was predicted or observed between SES and marital status on the degree to which the abuse was expected to impact the child. This makes sense, as it is the mother's single status, not the child's, which is involved in the stereotypes between single parenting and poverty, and so the stereotype breakage would not be as salient when answering questions that are solely about the child.

There was a predicted interaction between race and SES, such that low-SES would have a larger impact on the perception of Black parents than White parents. This prediction was not supported. This is inconsistent with past research which found that race became a more salient factor when considering low-SES individuals (Weeks & Lupfer 2004). This research was not done within the context of child abuse allegations, and it is possible that the results do not generalize into this context.

For the participants, there were correlations found such that childhood trauma due to abuse was associated with being raised in a single parent home or living in poverty. While these findings are not causal, they are consistent with research that identifies low-SES and single parent household as risk factors for childhood abuse (Barth, Wildfire & Green 2006; CDC, 2020). This further support the need to understand the relationship between these factors and childhood abuse. Though research consistently finds them to be risk factors, they could also serve as factors for prejudice, as found in this study.

Conclusion

Though the predictions were not supported, this study's results do support that race, SES, and marital status are all relevant factors in the perception of child abuse cases. It also supports that these factors are related to each other in the cases of abuse themselves. This study demonstrates that research should continue on how perception influences decision making and highlights the importance of including the perception of the child themselves within child abuse cases. The results may indicate that child abuse cases that break stereotypes elicit a stronger response from observers than cases that align with known risk-factors. These results may not generalize to specific professional populations such as CPS workers or medical workers but may be informative for instances in which lay people are asked to perceive child abuse cases, such as juries.

It is concerning that participants recommended varying levels of CPS intervention for cases they regarded as having the same level of believability. Further, cases were regarded differently depending on the race of the family, but race had no impact on the level of CPS action recommended. The inconsistency between perception and recommended action demonstrates the difficulty in research connecting prejudice with discrimination.

A limitation of this study is the narrow manipulations of the independent variables due to avoiding an overly complex study design. More information can be gained by examining other forms of family structure, such as such as single fathers and unmarried coparents. The same can be said for including more races and ethnic groups and examining more variations of SES.

Future research should further explore how attributes of the child, such as age and gender, affect how they are perceived in child abuse cases. There is a paucity of research that goes beyond the demographics of the family as a whole and specifically examines the child themselves. Better understanding how the child is perceived, and how that influences decision

making, can help better identify which children are at risk of being under-protected by services such as CPS.



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Table 1

Correlations and Inter-item Reliability for Dependent Variables and Salient Participant

Variables.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. QOM	.86								
2. QOC	.42***	.73							
3. ABQ	.74***	.49***	.89						
4. CPS	.46***	.24**	.49***						
5. Childhood Poverty	.05	.08	.09	.04					
6. Single Parent Household	.02	.11	.07	-.06	.31***				
7. Childhood Abuse Combined	-.06	.04	.05	.07	-.23**	-.25**			
8. Childhood Non-Sexual Abuse	-.01	.08	.07	.01	-.23**	-.29***	.79***		
9. Childhood Sexual Abuse	.08	-.01	.01	.09	-.15	-.13	.85***	.34***	

Note. Numbers along the diagonal represent scale reliability measured by Cronbach’s alpha.

Note. QOM abbreviates Questionnaire on Mother, QOC abbreviates Questionnaire on Child, ABQ abbreviates Abuse Believability Questionnaire, CPS stands for Child Protective Services question, and SES abbreviates socioeconomic status.

$n = 160$

* $p = .05$

** $p = .01$

*** $p < .001$

Table 2

Means and standard deviations of main effects for each dependent variable by each condition.

	Black	White	High SES	Low SES	Married	Single
QOM	5.13 (0.88)	5.45 (0.77)	5.31 (0.82)	5.26 (0.86)	5.31 (0.87)	5.26 (0.81)
QOC	4.87 (0.64)	5.12 (0.72)	4.99 (0.68)	4.98 (0.69)	4.99 (0.74)	4.99 (0.63)
ABQ	5.31 (1.12)	5.93 (0.80)	5.68 (1.04)	5.55 (1.00)	5.64 (1.15)	5.59 (0.88)
CPS	2.84 (0.68)	2.97 (0.70)	2.90 (0.69)	2.91 (0.70)	2.84 (0.69)	2.98 (0.69)

Note. Means are listed first in each cell, with the standard deviations included in parenthesis.

Note. QOM abbreviates Questionnaire on Mother, QOC abbreviates Questionnaire on Child,

ABQ abbreviates Abuse Belief Questionnaire, CPS stands for Child Protective Services

question, and SES abbreviates socioeconomic status.

n = 160



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Table 3

Means and standard deviations for all two-way interactions for all dependent variables by each condition.

	QOM	QOC	ABQ	CPS
Black + High-SES	5.09 (0.13)	4.84 (0.11)	5.37 (0.16)	2.88 (0.11)
Black + Low-SES	5.12 (0.13)	4.86 (0.11)	5.25 (0.15)	2.81 (0.11)
White + High-SES	5.53 (0.13)	5.14 (0.12)	5.99 (0.15)	2.94 (0.11)
White + Low-SES	5.42 (0.14)	5.07 (0.11)	5.92 (0.16)	3.03 (0.11)
Black + Married	5.15 (0.13)	4.88 (0.11)	5.35 (0.15)	2.90 (0.11)
Black + Single	5.10 (0.13)	4.85 (0.11)	5.27 (0.16)	2.78 (0.11)
White + Married	5.42 (0.14)	5.10 (0.12)	5.99 (0.17)	3.05 (0.11)
White + Single	5.43 (0.13)	5.10 (0.12)	5.92 (0.15)	2.92 (0.11)
High-SES + Married	5.21 (0.13)	5.02 (0.11)	5.61 (0.15)	2.71 (0.12)
High-SES + Single	5.41 (0.13)	4.95 (0.12)	5.75 (0.16)	3.11 (0.11)
Low-SES + Married	5.46 (0.14)	4.93 (0.11)	5.74 (0.17)	2.99 (0.11)
Low-SES + Single	5.11 (0.13)	5.03 (0.12)	5.43 (0.15)	2.85 (0.10)

Note. Means are listed first in each cell, with the standard deviations included in parenthesis.

Note. QOM abbreviates Questionnaire on Mother, QOC abbreviates Questionnaire on Child, ABQ abbreviates Abuse Belief Questionnaire, CPS stands for Child Protective Services question, and SES abbreviates socioeconomic status.

$n = 160$

Table 4

Means and standard deviations for all three-way interactions for all dependent variables by each condition.

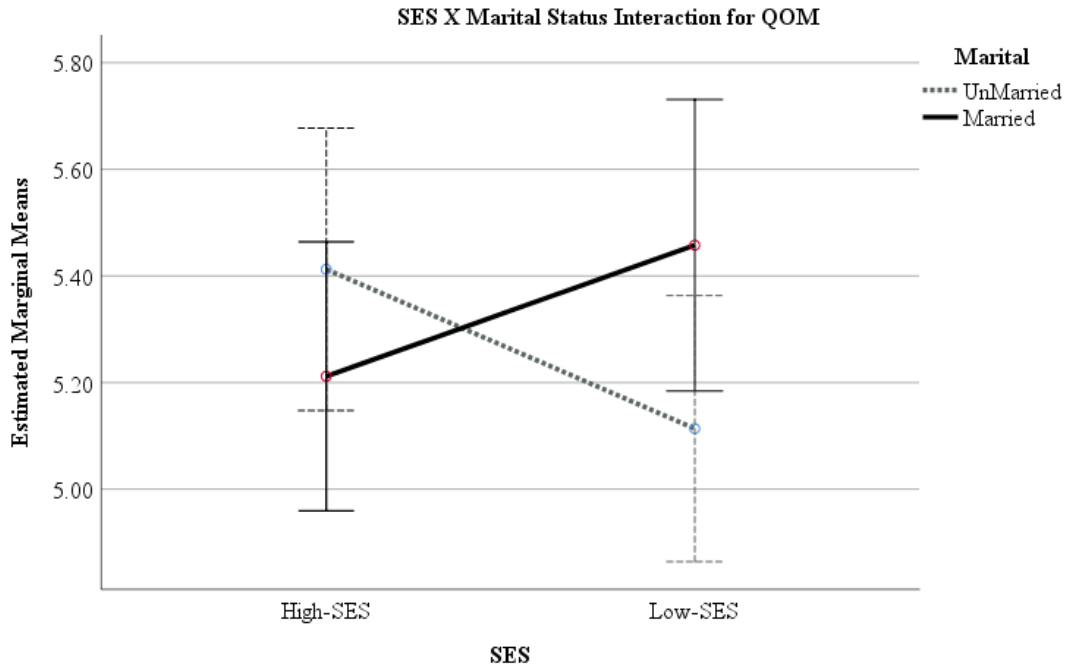
	QOM	QOC	ABQ	CPS
Black + High-SES + Single	5.14 (0.19)	4.94 (0.16)	5.37 (0.23)	3.11 (0.16)
Black + High-SES + Married	5.04 (0.19)	4.73 (0.15)	5.38 (0.22)	2.65 (0.15)
Black + Low-SES + Single	5.05 (0.19)	4.76 (0.15)	5.17 (0.22)	2.70 (0.15)
Black + Low-SES + Married	5.26 (0.18)	5.03 (0.15)	5.33 (0.21)	2.91 (0.15)
White + High-SES + Single	5.68 (0.19)	5.10 (0.16)	6.14 (0.23)	3.11 (0.16)
White + High-SES + Married	5.38 (0.18)	5.17 (0.15)	5.84 (0.21)	2.77 (0.15)
White + Low-SES + Single	5.18 (0.17)	5.10 (0.14)	5.70 (0.21)	3.00 (0.14)
White + Low-SES + Married	5.66 (0.21)	5.04 (0.18)	6.15 (0.25)	3.07 (0.18)

Note. Means are listed first in each cell, with the standard deviations included in parenthesis.

Note. QOM abbreviates Questionnaire on Mother, QOC abbreviates Questionnaire on Child, ABQ abbreviates Abuse Belief Questionnaire, CPS stands for Child Protective Services question, and SES abbreviates socioeconomic status.

n = 160

Figure 1



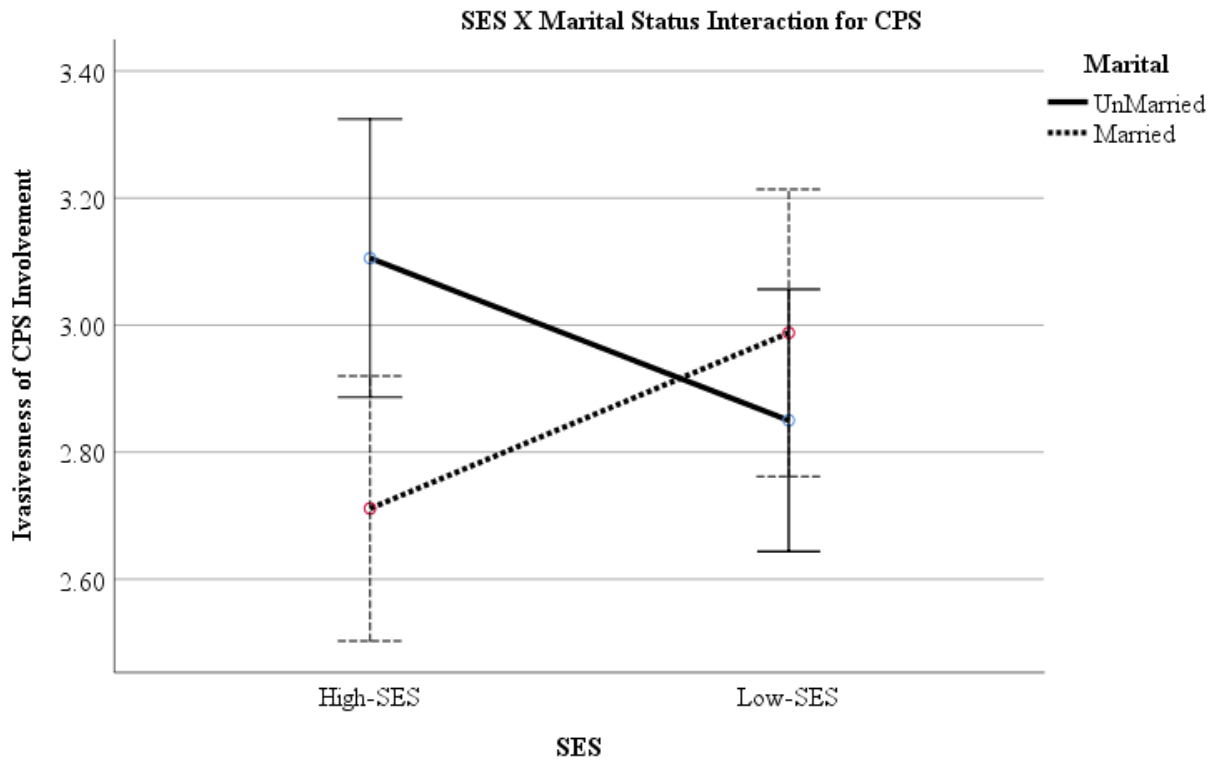
Note. SES abbreviates socioeconomic status and QOM abbreviates Questionnaire on Mother.

Note. Error Bars reflect 95% Confidence Intervals

n = 160.



Figure 2



Note. SES abbreviates socioeconomic status. CPS stands for Child Protective Services question.

Note. Error Bars reflect 95% Confidence Intervals

N = 160.

OGLETHORPE
UNIVERSITY

Appendix A
Consent Form
STUDY ERB-H
OGLETHORPE UNIVERSITY

Principal Investigators: Raquel Battaglia: ebattaglia@oglethorpe.edu; Dr. Brooke Bays: rbays@oglethorpe.edu.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a brief research study on factors that influence the perception of police reports.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

You will first be asked to read a police report. Then you will be given several questionnaires related to the report. Then you will be given a questionnaire that will ask for any potential personal experiences you have had with the material in the report. Finally, you will be asked to complete a demographics form. Your participation will last approximately 25 minutes and will require only 1 session.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

The report you read may detail an alleged violent crime, which some participants may find distressing. The detail of the story will not exceed that from a typical news report. The personal experiences questionnaire may ask you to disclose traumatic childhood experiences such as abuse, which may also be distressing for some participants. The questionnaire will be kept confidential, and you can decline to complete all or any part of it for any reason. There are no risks involved in participating in this study beyond those experienced in everyday life.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

While there are no direct benefits to you, we hope that you will learn something about behavioral science research methods by exposure to a specific topic of investigation.

WILL I BE COMPENSATED FOR MY PARTICIPATION?

Yes, you will receive 1 point of extra credit towards your psychology class(es).

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

While your name will appear on this consent form, no other identifying information will be collected. Your name will not be connected with any of your responses. Your identity as a participant and the information you provide will not be disclosed to anyone beyond the investigators.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions after you leave today you should contact the Principal Investigator Raquel Battaglia or Dr. Brooke Bays. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you should contact the Chair of the Oglethorpe University IRB, Dr. Lisa Hayes, at 404-364-8391 or lhayes1@oglethorpe.edu. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you can withdraw from the study at any time. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study, there will be no ramifications.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Print Name _____ **E-mail address** _____

Appendix B
Mug Shots from Chicago Face Database



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Appendix C Vignettes

Police Report – Officer 25498

I was dispatched to the scene at 3:30pm on the 15th of July in response to a call reporting suspected child abuse. The alleged victim, a 9-year-old male, was reported by parents of a playmate who noticed concerning bruises.

I arrived at the house of the suspected perpetrator, the mother of the child, *Janique/Jessica* Thompson an *African American/Caucasian* female approximately 30 years old. The house is located in Field's Park, a *low-income neighborhood/gated community* I frequently patrol. The house is noticeably *small and run-down/ large and well-kept*.

When the suspect opened the door, the child was standing behind her. The child had a Black eye and obvious bruising on his upper right arm.

I told the suspect I had been dispatched on a report of suspected child abuse. I asked the suspect if she could explain the Black eye and bruising on her son. The suspect expressed signs of anger, she asked who had reported suspicions about her, but did not offer an explanation for the bruising. I then turned to the child and asked him how he had received his bruises. The child said that his mother had given him the bruises.

I then arrested the suspect. I inquired if the child's father was available to watch the child. *Janique/Jessica* Thompson stated that she was *unmarried/married* and that the father *was not involved in the household/could watch the child when he got home*.

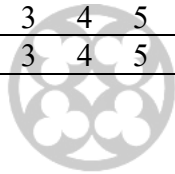
The suspect stated that the neighbor was a family friend who knew the child, and when I approached the neighbor about supervising the child they agreed to do so. I left the child with the neighbor (*until the father returned home*) and brought the suspect to the station for processing.

Appendix D

Questionnaire on Mother

Please circle one of the numbers between each of the word pairs below. The closer the number is to the word, the more strongly that word describes the mother in the police report.

Good Parent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad Parent
Strict	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Lenient
Stable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unstable
Nurturing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Neglectful
Sensitive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Callous
Responsible	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Irresponsible
Violent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Nonviolent
Blameworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Blameless
Harmful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Harmless
Competent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Incompetent
Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Unintelligent
Good-Natured	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Bad-Natured
Trustworthy	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Untrustworthy



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Appendix E

Questionnaire on Impact of Abuse on Child

With 1 being highly unlikely, and 7 being highly likely, to what extent do you think that the following will be true for the child? Please circle one number under each of the statements below.

The child will have low-self esteem

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

The child will trust others easily

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

The child will be unstable

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

The child will have a normal life

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

The child will have difficulty in relationships

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

The child will be depressed

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

The child will be self-confident

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

The child will be compassionate

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

The child will be able to relate to other people easily

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

Appendix F

Abuse Belief Questionnaire

With 1 being highly unlikely, and 7 being highly likely, to what extent do you think that the following statements are true? Please circle one number below each statement.

This child's bruises were due to abuse from his mother.

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

The mother should be charged as a criminal in court

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

The mother has abused the child on previous occasions.

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

If the child is left with his mother, she will abuse him.

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*

The police officer made a good decision when they arrested the mother.

Highly Unlikely 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 *Highly Likely*



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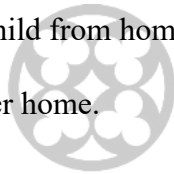
U N I V E R S I T Y

Questionnaire on CPS Action Endorsement

If Child Protective Services became involved, what action do you feel would be most appropriate? Options are listed below from least invasive action to most invasive action.

Please read each option, then circle the one option you feel is best.

1. *(non-invasive)* No action needed.
2. *(slightly invasive)* Leave child in home and provide in-home services for mother such as parental training.
3. *(moderately invasive)* Remove child from home and place into foster system with goal of eventual reunion with mother after steps are taken to avoid future incidents.
4. *(extremely invasive)* Remove child from home and place into foster system with goal of child being adopted into another home.



O G L E T H O R P E
U N I V E R S I T Y

Childhood Traumatic Events Scale

For the following questions, answer each item that is relevant. Be as honest as you can. Each question refers to any event that you may have experienced prior to the age of 17.

1. Prior to the age of 17, did you experience a death of a very close friend or family member? (yes/no) _____ If yes, how old were you? _____
 If yes, how traumatic was this? (using a 7-point scale, where 1 = not at all traumatic, 4 = somewhat traumatic, 7 = extremely traumatic) _____
 If yes, how much did you confide in others about this traumatic experience the time? (1 = not at all, 7 = a great deal) _____

2. Prior to the age of 17, was there a major upheaval between your parents (such as divorce, separation)? _____ If yes, how old were you? _____
 If yes, how traumatic was this? (where 7 = extremely traumatic) _____
 If yes, how much did you confide in others? (7 = a great deal) _____

3. Prior to the age of 17, did you have a traumatic sexual experience (raped, molested, etc.)? _____ If yes, how old were you? _____
 If yes, how traumatic was this? (7 = extremely traumatic) _____
 If yes, how much did you confide in others? (7 = a great deal) _____

4. Prior to the age of 17, were you the victim of violence (child abuse, mugged or assaulted -- other than sexual)? _____ If yes, how old were you? _____
 If yes, how traumatic was this? (7 = extremely traumatic) _____
 If yes, how much did you confide in others? (7 = a great deal) _____

5. Prior to the age of 17, were you extremely ill or injured? _____ If yes, how old were you? _____
 If yes, how traumatic was this? (7 = extremely traumatic) _____
 If yes, how much did you confide in others? (7 = a great deal) _____

6. Prior to the age of 17, did you experience any other major upheaval that you think may have shaped your life or personality significantly? _____ If yes, how old were you? _____
 If yes, what was the event? _____ If yes, how traumatic was this? (7 = extremely traumatic) _____
 If yes, how much did you confide in others? (7 = a great deal) _____

Appendix I

Demographics Questionnaire

Please select which one option best describes you:

Black (non-Hispanic): ____

White (non-Hispanic): ____

Hispanic: ____

Asian or Pacific Islander: ____

Multiracial: ____

Other: ____

What is your age? ____

What is your date of birth? (MM/DD/YEAR) ____/____/____

Please select which one option best describes you:

Male: ____

Female: ____

Transgender: ____

Non-Binary: ____

Other: ____

Childhood Socioeconomic Status:

Please select the demographic which you most closely associate with your childhood.

Upper Class ____

Upper-Middle Class ____

Middle Class ____

Lower-Middle Class ____

Working-Class ____

Do you feel that poverty personally affected you in your childhood?

Yes ____

No ____

Childhood Family Structure:

Please list the number of siblings that were raised in the same household as you during your childhood. Please also include any half or step siblings you were raised with.

Older brother(s) ____

Younger brother(s) ____

Older Sister(s) ____

Younger Sister(s) ____

Older Non-binary sibling(s) ____

Younger Non-binary sibling(s) ____

Please select the one option that best describes you in each category applicable to you:

Relationship to primary guardian(s):

Parent(s)-Child _____
 Foster Parent(s) [non-family member(s)]-Child _____
 Foster Parent(s) [family member(s)]- Child _____
 Institutional Care _____
 Other (please describe) _____

IF ONE PRIMARY GUARDIAN: Which one option would best describe your guardian during your childhood? If unsure, select the option that you feel was most impactful for your childhood.

Father/Other Male Guardian _____
 Mother/Other Female Guardian _____
 Non-Binary Parent/Guardian _____

IF TWO PRIMARY GUARDIANS: Which one option would best describe the relationship between your guardians during your childhood? If unsure, select the option that you feel was most impactful for your childhood.

Unmarried, Cohabiting _____
 Unmarried, Non-Cohabiting _____
 Married, Cohabiting _____
 Married, Non-Cohabiting _____

Please list your parents/guardians' genders: _____

If you feel there was something important about your family structure during your childhood that was not covered in this form, and that you wish to disclose, you can do so here:

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