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Effects of Person vs. Event Schematic Information on Perceptions of the Defendant and Verdicts in a Mock Jury Trial

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Poster Presentation 22

**EFFECTS OF PERSON VS. EVENT SCHEMATIC INFORMATION ON
PERCEPTIONS OF THE DEFENDANT AND VERDICTS
IN A MOCK JURY TRIAL**

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In this experiment, participants viewed a mock jury trial consisting of opening statements, prosecution and defense evidence, and judge's instructions. Jurors viewed either a trial designed to elicit an event schema or a person schema with which to evaluate the defendant. During the trial, the mock jurors rated their perceptions of the defendant using seven adjective pairs. At the conclusion of the trial, jurors gave either individual or group verdicts regarding the defendant.

Three adjective pairs had significantly different ratings between the schema types and across time. These pairs are: helpful-unhelpful; kind-unkind; and honest-dishonest. Jurors who received personal information were more likely than those in the event condition to tie their perceptions of the defendant to the side that had just presented evidence.

There was also a significant difference between the verdicts that were rendered. Individuals with personal information were more likely to find the defendant guilty, while groups with personal information were more likely to find the defendant not guilty.

These results suggest that giving personal information about the defendant to members of a jury may cause their attitudes to vary and be swayed by opposing sides more often than jurors who receive information only about the event itself.