

Understanding Children's Reports of Grooming in Child Sexual Abuse Cases

by

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## ABSTRACT

Grooming, the largely nonviolent tactics used to seduce children into sexual abuse, shifts healthy adult-child relationships into patterns of abuse. Grooming provides a framework for explaining delayed disclosure, recantations, and lack of evidence in child sexual abuse cases (CSA). Yet researchers have not established how grooming behaviors are addressed during the investigation and prosecution process. Across 4 studies I explored how grooming is addressed by legal and investigative actors. Across Studies 1 and 2 I analyzed a series of 138 forensic interviews and 134 trial transcripts to establish if and how interviewers and attorneys address reports of grooming. In Study 3 I examined 31 cases of expert testimony to explore whether experts reference grooming. In Study 4 I explored, experimentally, how attorney questioning and expert testimony related to grooming can influence perceptions of child credibility and subsequent case verdicts. In forensic interviews (Study 1), grooming questions comprised less than 5% of all questions asked and primarily related to exposure to pornography (46.8%); interviews may be missing an important opportunity to raise grooming with children. In criminal trials (Study 2), less than 2% of attorneys' questions addressed grooming. "Tell me more" questions yielded the most productive reports of grooming from children when compared to every other question type. This suggests attorneys should consider raising grooming more often, using open ended "tell-me-more" questions when they do. In expert testimony (Study 3), grooming was referenced in 52% of cases. Expert testimony often addressed boundary violations (19.4%) with no specific reference to their source of their knowledge. Experts should consider raising grooming in a larger proportion of their cases and mentioning the source of their knowledge when they do. Finally, I found no

impact of grooming education through expert testimony or attorney questioning on perceptions of child credibility or subsequent case verdicts (Study 4). The manipulation in this case may have been too weak, suggesting the need for replication. Training with these legal actors is an important avenue to educate them on grooming and how to raise grooming issues with the children they encounter.

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## **Understanding Children's Reports of Grooming in Child Sexual Abuse Cases**

Child maltreatment in the form of physical violence, emotional abuse, neglect, and sexual abuse have been described by the World Health Organization as a pervasive global problem with serious, lifelong consequences for children (World Health Organization, 2021). These forms of violence against children have been associated with suicidality, substance abuse, poor language development, depression, criminal behavior, and other maladaptive coping strategies (Browne & Finkelhor, 1986; Crouch & Milner, 1993; Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1993). Both the short- and long-term consequences of child abuse speak to the importance of identifying maltreatment, intervening when it occurs, and preventing it before it happens.

Child abuse exists on a continuum where child sexual abuse (CSA) is considered one of the most serious forms of violence against children. Estimates suggest that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys, in the U.S. alone, are victims of child sexual abuse (CSA) at some point in their childhood (Finkelhor et al., 1990), an estimate that is underinclusive of the many children who fail to disclose due to the complicated dynamics of CSA victimization (McElvaney, 2015). Researchers have established that children are often groomed into secrecy and denial by their abusers (Conte et al., 1989). These complex dynamics serve as a barrier to initial disclosure and then continued reporting of CSA. Overcoming these dynamics is important for the successful reporting and prosecution of CSA and is an integral step in protecting victims and preventing future abuse.

In many CSA cases, a child's parent, caregiver, or close familial adult is also their perpetrator (Finkelhor, 1995). As intimate offenders, perpetrators may employ different strategies and tactics, distinct from those used by stranger perpetrators, to encourage

victim compliance and prevent victim disclosure. These tactics constitute grooming behaviors and facilitate victim selection, compliance, and secrecy maintenance. Importantly, these tactics can explain the unintuitive ways that children often act when they have been victims of abuse. Specifically, grooming can explain delayed disclosure, partial disclosures, and recantation - behaviors and case characteristics which are somewhat counterintuitive to how lay people expect the victimization process to unfold. That is, while laypeople may expect a child who has been abused to disclose immediately and report a consistent error-free narrative, these intuitive disclosure characteristics are not all that common (London et al., 2005). Despite evidence which suggests grooming is a common tactic that can be used to explain a victim's behavior, it is neither well studied nor well understood. Therefore, work is needed to adequately address how reports of grooming are elicited from children to aid in identifying and understanding when a child has been victimized.

Many grooming behaviors blur the distinction between normal parenting behaviors and abuse. As such, understanding how these constellations of behaviors that occur collectively, as opposed to in isolation, may lay the foundation for identifying potential abuse victims. Yet, researchers have not thoroughly explored how grooming issues are addressed during intervention for CSA, to facilitate understanding of the victimization process. I have used a combination of naturalistic data (forensic interviews and trial transcripts) and experimental work, to establish how grooming issues are addressed during the investigation and prosecution process in an effort to improve questioning techniques related to the grooming process. The aims of the present studies were threefold: to 1) explore how reports of grooming were elicited from children during

forensic interviews, 2) explore how these issues were addressed in court, and 3) assess how jurors interpreted children's reports of grooming, and how this influenced their assessments of children's credibility. All are essential to ensure fair case outcomes for children. In doing so, this work helps to create a more complete understanding of the victimization process.

### **Grooming in CSA Cases**

The term grooming emerged in the 1970's in responses to increased awareness of the widespread nature of intrafamilial sexual abuse and the complexity of victim-perpetrator dynamics (Lanning, 2018). This rose as a stark contrast to the overemphasis on "stranger danger" and widespread beliefs that CSA was typically perpetrated by an adult the child did not know. Indeed, legal policy is still reflective of this today with programs like sex offender registration and living restrictions for sex offenders. Instead, we see that CSA perpetrators are often someone close to the child. For instance, across an examination of 524 CSA cases, the perpetrator was someone the child knew in 92% of cases (Sas & Cunningham, 1995). Of intrafamilial cases, fathers and stepfathers are the most common perpetrators (Richards, 2011). Researchers have established that CSA is often intrafamilial or perpetrated by a close adult, leading to a more complex victim-perpetrator dynamic than abuse perpetrated by a stranger. Grooming can explain, in part, the victim-perpetrator dynamics in many of these cases.

While there is a general consensus on the concept of grooming as a tactic used in the pre-abuse phase, there is disagreement on the various techniques that perpetrators use when employing these tactics on children. For instance, some definitions of grooming focus on abstract stage models (McAlinden, 2006; Winters & Jeglic, 2017) while others

attempt to define concrete behaviors that constitute abuse (Berliner & Conte, 1990; Christiansen & Blake, 1990). In an attempt to resolve these discrepancies in definition and application, Bennett and O'Donohue (2014) defined grooming as “antecedent inappropriate behavior that functions to increase the likelihood of future sexual abuse” and developed a list of behaviors that can be defined as grooming. These behaviors incorporate ideas from numerous previous studies on the grooming process including examples like gift giving (Christiansen & Blake, 1990), isolating the child (Warner, 2000), threats not to tell (Berliner & Conte, 1990), as well as requests for secrecy (Van Dam, 2001). Collectively, these studies provide a foundation for identifying grooming behaviors, further providing a structure for understanding how grooming may influence child behavior relating to abuse.

While concrete definitions of grooming vary across studies, researchers have supported grooming and post-abuse secrecy tactics as common among perpetrators. Across an examination of over 200 perpetrators of CSA, over half of participants self-reported that they groomed their potential victims to increase their compliance with abuse (Kaufman et al., 1998). This tactic works incrementally to both increase compliance and decrease the odds of disclosure. It represents a gradual shift from outwardly positive behaviors with underlying motivations, to more overt sexually abusive behavior. Furthermore, grooming may mean that the child doesn't initially recognize the abusive behavior as abusive. Many of the seemingly normal parental behaviors of grooming, like gift giving and favoritism, may seem loving or protective, making them difficult for children to identify and subsequently disclose (Hartill, 2009). This may be less true of post-abuse tactics to maintain secrecy such as threats (both overt and subtle) and requests

not to tell, where it may become more obvious to the child that the behavior is abnormal. Thus, grooming serves numerous purposes in the process of victimization and is a widespread tactic used by perpetrators of abuse. Importantly, it serves to prolong a child's victimization by preventing disclosure, serving as a barrier to their safety.

### **Child-Perpetrator Relationship and Grooming**

Characteristics related to the victim, perpetrator, and victim-perpetrator relationship influence whether and how a child is groomed. Most cases of CSA are intrafamilial, often perpetrated by a father or step-father (Finkelhor, 1995; Kocturk & Yuksel, 2019). Of those cases that are not intrafamilial, the vast majority involve a known adult close to the child, with very few cases perpetrated by a stranger (Radford et al., 2011). Intrafamilial cases of CSA are distinct from extrafamilial cases in numerous ways, often involving more episodes of abuse (Fischer & McDonald, 1998) and longer delays in disclosure (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003). These cases are further distinct in the methods used to recruit the child and maintain their secrecy. For instance, across an examination of 1,037 archival records of intrafamilial and extrafamilial cases of CSA, extrafamilial sexual abusers used gifts more often than intrafamilial abusers, while intrafamilial abusers were more likely to use conversations about nondisclosure (Fischer & McDonald, 1998). Intrafamilial perpetrators may resort to more overt methods of secrecy maintenance (i.e., threats and requests not to tell) since they have more frequent, supervisory contact with the child, creating greater opportunity to foster a more robust environment of isolation (Katz & Field, 2020). Importantly, no research to date has explored differences in grooming behaviors within intrafamilial abuse; that is, differences in parental/caregiver grooming tactics and grooming tactics used by immediate as



compared to more peripheral family (e.g., grandparents, uncles). These behaviors and tactics might be expected to vary as there are inherent relationship-dynamic differences, such as between a child-older sibling and a child-grandparent, for example.

### **Child Age and Grooming**

There are large developmental differences between younger and older children. As a result, perpetrators may tailor their grooming strategies to the child's age and the vulnerabilities that result from their developmental stage (Lanning, 2010). For instance, a perpetrator may be more likely to use tickling or wrestling to groom a young child into abuse since these behaviors are not uncommon or unusual for young children.

Alternatively, perpetrators may use bribes or sexualized behavior with older children to portray themselves as relatable or peer-like (Winters & Jeglic, 2016). Older children may have a more thorough understanding of what constitutes sexual assault, whereas younger children who have little to no knowledge or education on age-appropriate relationships may not recognize these behaviors as abusive. With younger children, perpetrators may also frame abuse-as-a-game, but may adopt a different tactic for older children. This may lead to delayed disclosure, because young children may not conceptualize acts as abuse until they understand more about sexual touch and boundaries. While different grooming and secrecy maintenance tactics may be expected to be used with children as a function of their age, little research to date has explored how age may impact a perpetrator's grooming decisions.

### **The Influence of Grooming on Child Behavior**

Many children who make a credible report of abuse undergo an investigative interview. During the investigative interview process, interviewees are tasked with

creating a complete picture of the abuse that may have occurred. To adequately understand a child's behavior and lay the foundation for establishing the veracity of an abuse claim, interviewers must establish what the child -perpetrator relationship looked like. We can look to grooming to better understand children's behavior and garner a more complete understanding of the complex victim-perpetrator dynamic that ensues.

As noted, many perpetrators of CSA are a close family member or friend. As such, a preexisting relationship often exists between the child and perpetrator prior to a child's abuse. To develop a strong, positive connection with the child, perpetrators may shower the child with gifts or favoritism. While these behaviors in isolation may be completely normal, collectively, they may serve to develop cooperation and perceptions of the perpetrator as non-threatening (McAlinden 2006; Mooney & Ost, 2013). These tactics allow the abuser to more easily manipulate the child into patterns of abuse and create the impression that the child and the perpetrator have a unique bond (Mooney & Ost, 2013). Children may further feel a sense of loyalty to their perpetrator who has used these pre-abuse tactics to build a relationship with the child - particularly in cases of abuse by a parent where the child's perpetrator also serves as their caregiver. As such, grooming is an important step in the victimization process and can explain why a child may have positive feelings towards their abuser.

In addition to explaining the child-perpetrator relationship, grooming may be useful for understanding why a child would keep the abuse a secret or delay disclosure. Children frequently delay disclosure of abuse or fail to disclose (for a review see McElvaney, 2015). Children who delay disclosure may do so due to threats of secrecy, bribery, and gift giving--all examples of grooming. These tactics to maintain privacy may

be effective. Researchers have established that children who are groomed by their abusers tend to delay disclosure longer than those who use force (Saz & Cunningham, 1995). Importantly, charges of force are infrequent in these cases (Stolzenberg & Lyon, 2014). Despite this, analyses of the ways in which children disclose abuse often fail to note the importance of grooming in explaining a delayed disclosure instead focusing on maternal support, age, gender, and abuse severity as predictors of a disclosure delay (McElvaney, 2015). Children may be highly motivated through a combination of grooming and post-abuse secrecy tactics, to keep the abuse a secret.

Similarly, grooming may be useful for understanding and explaining a child's recantation. A recantation occurs when a child who has made a claim of abuse retracts their allegation. Recantations are either the result of a true denial or a false denial. Empirical evidence suggests false denials happen with some regularity (Malloy et al., 2007). In such cases, where grooming is a tactic used to maintain secrecy (Craven et al., 2006), it may further be used to explain a child's behavior when they do recant. That is, a child may have been groomed into secrecy, which is then re-established post-disclosure (either by the perpetrator, or even a non-offending caregiver who is fearful of the consequences of the child's disclosure). Subsequent research on adult recantation of domestic violence finds that interpersonal processes, like sympathy, contribute to the recantation process (Bonomi et al., 2011). Such processes may be similar for children who recant, who have developed a close relationship with their abuser. Similarly, student accounts of grooming from professors note the close personal relationships these victims developed with their abuser (Bull & Page, 2021). Adult abuse dynamics are of course different than those of a child and an adult, but the close relationships evident in both

may mean the motivational process for recantation, that result from this same power differential, is somewhat similar. As such, grooming is foundational in understanding these dynamics of victimization and are captured in a child's behavior both pre- and post-abuse.

### **Forensic Interviews of CSA Victims**

Despite the clear behavioral implications of grooming, little work explores how it is addressed by forensic interviewers and attorneys during the investigation process. Eliciting these details is an important step in establishing the veracity of an abuse claim as grooming is often an integral part of the victimization process. Furthermore, eliciting reports of grooming is important for establishing the credibility of a delayed disclosure, recantation, or incomplete disclosure, all of which are somewhat common (Poole & Lindsay, 1998; Malloy et al., 2007; Sas & Cunningham, 1995).

Recent guidelines for forensic interviewers generally suggest asking about grooming issues (Bennett & O'Donohue, 2016), yet the forensic interviewing process is subjective and varies greatly across interviewers (Everson & Sandoval, 2011). Researchers have yet to establish whether interviewers ask about the child-perpetrator relationship pre-abuse, or the tactics used by the perpetrator to maintain the child's secrecy post-abuse. These issues are important as they have direct implications for how the abuse is both understood and prosecuted. That is, in addition to having sentencing implications (Pollack & MacIver, 2015), these tactics further help create a clear picture of the plausibility of abuse - something we know to be central in determining whether a case reaches court and is successfully prosecuted (Stolzenberg & Lyon, 2014b). If forensic interviewers are not addressing grooming or infrequently addressing grooming, this may

be a missed opportunity to garner a clear and complete understanding of the abuse. Future trainings could serve as an important avenue to educate interviewers on how to question children about this aspect of abuse.

Protocols surrounding how to specifically address grooming during the interview process are notably vague. For example, the supplemental question suggestions when conducting a forensic interview by Ahern and Lyon (2011) do not provide guidelines for how to systematically address the grooming process. Importantly, researchers have not established how interviewers are asking if and how grooming has occurred. As they have limited guidance to ask about grooming, these issues might be expected to arise with great inconsistency. My research is a first step in understanding what kind of information on grooming is typically gathered, to then allow for a systematic assessment in the future about how it might best be done.

### **Prosecution of CSA Cases**

Some cases of CSA progress to prosecution after the forensic interview process. Researchers have established that jurors are more likely to acquit in cases with counterintuitive characteristics (Stolzenberg & Lyon, 2014b). This is a path by which prosecuting attorneys can establish child credibility to create a narrative of abuse that makes sense to jurors. CSA is somewhat distinct from many other crimes in that these cases are riddled with concerns about child credibility (Denne et al., 2020). The case processing across CSA cases is generally poorer than those for crime in general, possibly a reflection of concerns over children's ability to serve as reliable witnesses.

Cross and colleagues (2003) conducted a meta-analysis on case processing decisions in 21 studies exploring child abuse cases. They found that child abuse was less

likely to result in filing charges when compared to several other felonies, suggesting poorer case processing. Similarly, the authors conducted an examination of child sexual abuse cases in 4 jurisdictions from 1988-1989. Across this sample, 38% of cases received decisions to *not* prosecute. The majority of cases that were prosecuted resulted in a conviction (Cross et al., 1995). Yet the high number of cases that failed to reach court fell in line with prior research suggesting poor case processing for CSA cases in general.

Exemplifying concerns that result in poor case processing, there is often no corroborative evidence in CSA cases to confirm a child's claims. Often medical evidence is unavailable due to delays in reporting, or is inconclusive as CSA often leaves no physical signs of abuse (Finkelhor, 1984). A child's testimony is often the only form of available evidence, placing a great deal of weight on this report. Researchers have established that jurors often misunderstand the abuse process and ask questions about the dynamics of abuse when given the opportunity (i.e. questions related to delayed disclosure, a child's subjective reaction to the abuse, etc.; St George et al., 2020). These dynamics are related to a child's credibility as a victim which influences case outcomes in important and meaningful ways.

In addition to being central to building a strong case, establishing whether and how grooming has occurred has important sentencing consequences, as grooming is a form of predatory behavior. For instance, section §2422 of the U.S. Federal Criminal Code requires fines and imprisonment for those who groom children into any sexual activity (Coercion and Enticement 18 U.S.C. 2422, 2006). Yet, it is unclear how those who work with CSA victims establish whether and how grooming occurred. Evidence suggests that these issues are largely ignored in court. Only one study has explored

whether attorneys discuss grooming with children in court - finding that this happens rarely (Stolzenberg & Lyon, 2014b). However, this research only focused on disclosure-based questions during the trial. While an important step, this work is limited in scope as grooming issues are likely to arise outside the context of disclosure-based questions as well. Generally speaking, inadequate work has been done to assess whether and how courts address grooming and post-abuse secrecy tactics. Thus, it was important to explore how frequently attorneys raise grooming issues and the questions attorneys use to discuss grooming, if at all. It is likely that defense attorneys and prosecuting attorneys give these issues proportionately different attention as their motivation for raising these issues is different.

### **Question Type**

How interviewers and attorneys pose their questions greatly influences how the child responds, the accuracy of their response, the productivity of their response, and the coherence of their abuse narrative (Davies et al., 2000; Stolzenberg & Lyon, 2014b; Sullivan et al., 2021). For example, open invitation questions (e.g., “Tell me everything that happened?”) have been shown to elicit narrative accounts of abuse, particularly from older children, while close-ended questions (e.g., “Did he do X?”) have been linked to more child inconsistencies (Lamb & Fauchier, 2001). In addition, across the field, there is a strong preference for the use of cued-invitations (e.g., “You said X. Tell me more about X.”) and free-recall (e.g., “What happened next?”) which are less suggestive methods for eliciting information from children than direct questions (e.g. yes/no questions; Lamb et al., 2007).

While non-suggestive questioning is preferred in many cases, more direct questions may be necessary to elicit complete details of abuse. For example, numeracy questions (e.g., inquiring about the number of times the abuse occurred) yield the most productive responses when posed as close-ended, forced-choice questions (Orbach & Lamb, 2007). This finding is not isolated to numeracy, researchers have found that direct questions may be needed to elicit specific details. For example, when making allegations of CSA in court, attorneys often ask a combination of general and specific questions related to the body mechanics of abuse. These questions, when either overly broad or overly specific, often result in uninformative answers from children (Sullivan et al., 2021). In these cases, more specific wh- questions may be necessary to create a complete enough picture of the abuse for it to be prosecuted in court. Similarly, attorneys frequently rely on yes/no questions when asking children about recall for prior questions during CSA trials. Yet, these questions tend to lead to unelaborative responses from children as well (Stolzenberg & Lyon, 2014b). Invitations for free recall may not always elicit the specific details needed to prosecute a case. When attorneys are looking for an answer to a specific question to which children may not provide a spontaneous report through free recall, WH- questions may be useful (Lyon et al., 2012). WH- questions can yield productive responses, particularly from young children, who may need more structure to provide details in their response (Kulkofsky et al., 2008).

More suggestive questioning practices pose a risk of eliciting a false report, or even false detail reporting for a true disclosure (Lamb et al., 2007). False disclosures do happen and are not infrequent due to suggestive questioning techniques (Gonzalez et al., 1993). Though false disclosures do occur, eliciting false details of *true* reports is also



problematic. False details often arise in the form of inconsistencies across children's reports (for example inconsistencies across police reports and testimony during trial). These inconsistencies may negate the child's credibility overall, limiting the ability to process the case forward because of credibility concerns.

Inconsistencies across CSA reports in court can be the result of specific as opposed to open-ended questions (Pichler et al., 2021), though specific questions may be necessary to elicit certain abuse details. The use of specific vs. open-ended questions requires those questioning children to balance the need for informative, detailed, and complete reports with accurate and error-free reports (Saywitz et al., 2002). While both are important for creating a coherent abuse narrative, report accuracy can be difficult to measure. That is, while it is possible to assess report consistency across different disclosure recipients, it is impossible to measure the accuracy of these reports. For the purpose of the present investigation, I have focused on report informativeness and completeness through measures of report productivity. Examining the kinds of questions that elicit the most productive reports from children is one important element of understanding how to create a clear and detailed picture of the abuse. The types of questions, from both attorneys and forensic interviews, that yield the most detailed reports of grooming from children have not yet been examined in the literature.

### **Expert Evidence in CSA cases**

While attorney questioning is used to elucidate the dynamics of how abuse unfolded, jurors still may not have adequate background knowledge about the process of victimization in CSA cases to make fair and just decisions. There are numerous avenues available in court to educate jurors about issues they may not understand. One such

avenue is expert testimony. Expert testimony can provide jurors with objective information about complex scientific issues in an effort to structure their decision making in appropriate ways. Expert testimony is commonly utilized in CSA cases and a fair amount of experimental work has been done exploring how and when it is effective. For example, Goodman-Delahunty and colleagues (2010) presented undergraduate participants with a case of CSA containing either expert testimony or jury instructions. The authors found that both expert testimony and jury instructions significantly increased jurors' understanding of the dynamics of CSA. Furthermore, perceptions of child credibility significantly mediated the influence of knowledge about CSA on case verdicts. That is, the more jurors viewed the child as credible, the more likely they were to convict the defendant.

This work speaks to the importance of establishing the child as credible in court and creating a coherent, understandable narrative of the abuse for jurors. Grooming is an important element of narrative coherence, as it can explain complex issues like delayed disclosure and recantation which are notably common in CSA cases (Malloy et al., 2007; Sas & Cunningham, 1995). Are experts using the foundation of grooming to explain these less intuitive elements of the victimization process? No fieldwork has been done exploring the content of expert testimony in CSA cases for children making allegations of abuse. As such, little is known about what issues experts highlight and neglect in these cases, despite evidence which suggests it may be an essential element of understanding childhood victimization (Craven et al., 2006).

## **Juror Understanding of the Nature of CSA**

Jurors are key determinants in the prosecution of these cases, yet researchers have established that they vary greatly in their understanding of the dynamics of CSA, often holding true beliefs, false beliefs, and uncertainty simultaneously (McGurie & London, 2017). For instance, when given the option to ask questions during CSA trials, 15% of juror questions were devoted to disclosure issues alone, suggesting jurors may have a difficult time attributing delays in disclosure, disclosure denials, and incomplete disclosures to the ways in which the child has been groomed into secrecy (St. George et al., 2020).

Further evidence suggests defense attorneys highlight unintuitive child behavior in court, potentially exacerbating jurors' concerns and misunderstandings. Across an examination of 122 trial transcripts of children alleging CSA, defense attorneys frequently raised issues related to the child's close relationship with their perpetrator and issues related to incomplete and delayed disclosures (Denne et al., 2022). The researchers found that defense attorneys highlighted rape myths in court through questions focused on unintuitive child and perpetrator behavior such as lack of force and resistance (St. George et al., 2021). These unintuitive behaviors influence case verdicts. Specifically, Stolzenberg and Lyon (2014a) found that jurors were nine times more likely to convict in CSA cases involving force despite simultaneous evidence establishing the majority of CSA cases in their sample as non-forceful. Such unintuitive case characteristics are salient to jurors, yet we know little about how grooming may serve as a behavioral lens for jurors to view and understand these counterintuitive case characteristics.

In addition, jurors appear to have little understanding of the grooming process. For instance, Winters and Jeglic (2017) presented 393 undergraduate students with CSA vignettes representing a series of different grooming behaviors and asked these mock jurors to estimate the likelihood that the man was a “child molester.” The authors found that participants were unable to recognize any of the grooming behaviors as a potential risk factor for future victimization. It is likely jurors have difficulty identifying grooming tactics and the subsequent behavioral implications in court - especially if attorneys do not explicitly address issues of grooming in court. Jurors may misunderstand abuse dynamics and how grooming contributes to compliance and delayed disclosure. Yet little is known about how jurors apply a child’s grooming narrative to their assessments of child credibility and subsequent case verdicts.

### **Definitions of Grooming in Prior Research**

In an attempt to understand grooming behaviors and how they operate, numerous models and definitions of grooming exist. Theoretical models are important for identifying the ways in which abuse operates to inform education and intervention efforts. The present project draws upon numerous definitions of grooming to facilitate a thorough and evidence-based understanding of the grooming process. Specifically, I drew upon Bennett and O'Donohue’s (2014) definition of grooming along with Winters and colleagues’ (2021) definition of grooming, as both are the most recent and comprehensive. Both definitions make meaningful and important contributions to the grooming literature, yet neither alone creates a complete and detailed picture of grooming. As such, I used aspects of both to inform my conceptualization and measures of grooming behaviors.

Bennett and O'Donohue's (2014) definition of grooming integrates the work of numerous prior authors to provide a detailed description of 13 behaviors that may be indicative of grooming. This set of behaviors served as the foundation for the present series of projects. Yet, Winters and colleagues' (2021) recent paper cautioned against definitions of grooming that list specific grooming behaviors since tactics may vary by offender and context. Instead, they have argued that grooming should be defined by stages and provided the following, and most recent, definition of grooming:

“Sexual grooming is the deceptive process used by sexual abusers to facilitate sexual contact with a minor while simultaneously avoiding detection. Prior to the commission of the sexual abuse, the would-be sexual abuser may select a victim, gain access to and isolate the minor, develop trust with the minor and often their guardians, community, and youth-serving institutions, and desensitize the minor to sexual content and physical contact. Post-abuse, the offender may use maintenance strategies on the victim to facilitate future sexual abuse and/or to prevent disclosure” (p.8).

This definition emphasizes the importance of the underlying motivation behind a behavior as opposed to specific behavioral indicators of grooming. Yet, it is often impossible to determine an offender's underlying motivation. The present study drew upon children's reports of grooming, where we cannot assess or measure an offender's motivation. For that reason, I employed Bennett and O'Donohue's conceptualization of grooming behaviors to develop my coding scheme.

However, Bennett and O'Donohue's definition of grooming does not highlight nor draw attention to the cyclical nature of grooming, instead focusing on grooming as a pre-abuse tactic. As such, I did not use this definition alone. Winters (2021) noted that grooming may occur both pre and post abuse – an important theoretical contribution. I incorporated Winters' conceptualization of the cyclical nature of grooming by coding for both grooming behaviors that occurred prior to and after the abuse. While behavioral indications of grooming are important for identifying when grooming has occurred (i.e. Bennett and O'Donohue's model), stage models such as that proposed by Winters and colleges (2021) are also useful for understanding the motivation and purposes behind these behaviors in the sequence of abuse (e.g.: engagement, concealment).

Still, both definitions of grooming neglect the subtle differences in tactics used to facilitate compliance and those used to maintain abuse secrecy, providing the umbrella term of grooming for both. Indeed, numerous prior definitions of grooming have included tactics to maintain the child's secrecy post-abuse such as threats and requests for secrecy (Elliott et al., 1995). These definitions are conceptually murky as there are clear substantive differences between grooming to increase compliance in abusive acts and tactics to facilitate secrecy. My research differentiated grooming behaviors to increase compliance (e.g., gift giving, favoritism) and behaviors to maintain secrecy (e.g., threats and questions about nondisclosure).

### **The Current Research**

Across four studies, I examined grooming as an important element of the investigation and prosecution of CSA. Specifically, the aims of this research were to explore:

- 1) How reports of grooming were elicited from children,
- 2) How these issues were addressed in court, and
- 3) How attorneys and experts can successfully educate jurors on grooming.

Using mixed-methods across the four studies, I:

- 1) Analyzed 138 forensic interviews to establish how interviewers elicit reports of grooming
- 2) Coded 134 trial transcripts to establish how attorneys address grooming in court
- 3) Coded 31 cases of expert testimony to explore whether/how experts reference grooming
- 4) Explored, experimentally, how attorney questioning and expert testimony related to grooming influence perceptions of child credibility.

This work advances the field by laying the foundation for understanding how interviewers and attorneys address grooming issues. Future research can then guide them on how to do it better if there is room for improvement.

## **Research Design and Methodology**

### **Study 1: Grooming in CSA Forensic Interviews**

Despite evidence which suggests grooming may be integral to understanding abuse allegations, little work has explored whether forensic interviewers question children about grooming. Understanding how a child was groomed may help explain their behavior both before and after the abuse began. The goal of Study 1 was to understand how interviewers elicit reports of grooming from children. This serves as an important avenue for educating forensic interviewers, through future research, on how to elicit the

most complete and productive reports from children. As protocols for forensic interviewers infrequently addresses grooming, I expected these issues to be highly variable during the forensic interview process. This study answered the following questions: How do forensic interviewers ask about grooming? What questions from forensic interviewers elicit the most productive responses from children related to grooming? And finally, do children provide reports spontaneously or after specific interviewer questions?

### *Hypotheses*

**H1.** Forensic interviewers will ask about grooming in less than 50% of all cases due to a lack of protocol advice.

**H2.** Since grooming involves specific behaviors that children may not immediately identify as abusive, a more specific question may be necessary to elicit reports of grooming. As such, Wh- questions related to grooming will yield the most productive responses from children when compared to every other question type.

**H3.** Children will infrequently (i.e. less than 25% of the time) raise grooming issues spontaneously as children may not recognize these behaviors as abusive tactics.

**H4.** I will conduct exploratory analyses to examine the relationship between the age of the child and questions related to grooming.

**H5.** I will conduct exploratory analyses to examine the relationship between the child-perpetrator relationship and questions related to grooming.



## ***Method***

In collaboration with the Phoenix Children's Hospital (PCH) Child Protection Team, I studied a database of 321 forensic interviews of children under investigation for victimization of CSA in Maricopa County, Arizona. Forensic interviews were conducted at the Forensic Outpatient Clinic at PCH by two interviewers trained on the National Institute of Health and Human Development (NICHD) interview protocol. Cases were included if they contained a complete interview from a child between ages 4 and 18 occurring between January 2015 - December 2017; the child spoke English; the case contained a report of CSA; the child's legally authorized representative signed consent for participation; and the child assented, cooperated with, and was able to participate in the interview process. In the sample, children ranged in age from 4 - 17 ( $M_{\text{age}} = 112.48$  months,  $SD = 46.01$  months) and were predominantly Female (74.5%).

Although these video-recorded interviews are currently being transcribed (see Appendix A for transcription guide), I was able to investigate a subset of 138 of these cases that had complete transcriptions. Every video that was transcribed was checked word by word by a second trained transcriber for 100% accuracy. For the purpose of this investigation, I coded the 138 cases that were transcribed and checked as of February 10<sup>th</sup> 2022. This subsample consisted of children age 4 -17 ( $M = 8.53$ ,  $SD = 3.90$ ) and predominately Female (61%, 39% Male). The majority of children in this sample were Caucasian (52%, 25% Hispanic, 11% Native American, 10% African America, <1% Asian, <1% Middle Eastern). Perpetrators in these cases were predominately Male (91%, 9% Female) and Caucasian (60%, 18% Hispanic, 7% African American, 1% Native American, <1% Asian; 12% unknown). They ranged in age from 5 - 76 ( $M = 26.88$ ,  $SD =$

14.58; 8.7% of cases unknown perpetrator age). Forty-four cases (31.8%) involved a perpetrator who was under the age of 18. The majority of perpetrators were a family member (43%; 29% family friend or close known adult, 26% parent or caregiver, 2% stranger).

I obtained approval from both PCH and Arizona State University (ASU) Institutional Review Boards (IRB) to conduct this research. Due to the sensitive nature of this data, the coders of this data and I went through additional ethics and compliance training through PCH. This involved coursework, background checks, a drug screen, and a signed curriculum vitae. PCH provided us with a videotaped forensic interview, a forensic written report, and medical record data for each child. Medical record data were completed by the PCH forensic interviewing team and contained information about any preparatory statements made to the child, demographic information about both the child and alleged perpetrator, disclosure information (type of disclosure, length of delay between abuse and disclosure, and the child's relationship to the first disclosure recipient). The PCH forensic interviewing team further attained consent from a caretaker including consent for a medical exam of the child, acknowledgement that the interview would be video recorded, acknowledgement that law enforcement and child protective professionals would be provided records of the medical exam and forensic interview, and consent for the findings to be used for teaching and research (see Appendix B). Only data from children whose caretakers assented to use of this data for research purposes were included in the sample.

There were 1,949 forensic interviews conducted by the two PCH forensic interviewers between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 through December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Numerous cases

were eliminated from my sample as they did not meet my inclusion criteria noted above. Specifically, 641 children were referred for physical abuse, domestic violence/homicide witness, and neglect; 323 law enforcement, Department of Child Safety, or Tribal Social Services interviews were excluded for lack of signed consent; 163 children were outside our age parameters (133 under the age of 4 and 30 interviews over 18); 47 records had missing data and were excluded from our sample; 43 interviews involved developmentally delayed children or had a mental illness that precluded the interview; 20 children refused the interview; and 9 interviews needed language translation. Of the 703 remaining sexual abuse cases, 460 were recorded with Phoenix PD, Mesa PD, or Southwest Advocacy Center software and could not be edited to blur out the image of the child using the software PCH allowed (I could not obtain cases where the child was not blurred out).

### ***Measures***

Two independent trained coders coded all interviews of children making allegations of CSA based on a theoretically developed coding scheme (See Appendix C). I used thematic analysis, developing a coding guide based on a combination of previous research and grooming themes that appear when reading the transcripts. Thematic analysis has been consistently described as a strong method of qualitative analysis as it allows for a flexible deductive and inductive approach to analyzing data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is a method for identifying and describing trends in a dataset using both prior research and emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This created a clear and detailed picture that was both theory-driven and guided by the data. As such, this method

of data analysis, in combination with quantitative methodology, allowed for a comprehensive, thorough, and rich examination of the dataset.

Coders coded both forensic interviewers' questions and children's responses. Before coding question-answer pairs, I used detailed information provided by the PCH team to record the age of child, gender of child, relationship to the perpetrator, and race/ethnicity of the child. Coders then identified any question-answer pair that referenced a grooming behavior to facilitate compliance or a grooming behavior to maintain the child's secrecy. *Form of grooming was coded* using a modified version of the 13 grooming behaviors identified by Bennett and O'Donohue (2014), as well as sensitivity to additional grooming behaviors not mentioned by the authors but appearing with regularity in the transcripts. These grooming behaviors were categorized into grooming tactics to increase compliance and tactics to maintain secrecy as identified by Winters and colleagues (2021).

The question-answer pairs, identified as referencing grooming, were coded for question type and response productivity. *Question type was coded* as 1) yes-no, 2) forced-choice, 3) tag 4) negative term, 4) WH- 5) How, 6) Statement questions, 7) Do you know/remember/ can you, 8) tell me more/about, 9) not a question, 10) unclassified (See Appendix E). *Response-productivity was coded* for the number of words as a proxy for details and informativeness as has been deemed appropriate in prior work (Poole & Dickinson, 2000). I used Excel to automatically calculate the number of words in a child's response.

Finally, coders indicated whether the child spontaneously raised grooming-related issues or after a focused question related to grooming. The team first employed the

coding guide on 10% of the sample to check for systematic errors in the coding process. Inter-rater agreement across the coders was assessed across 20% of transcripts to ensure strong agreement. Kappa is a common measure of interrater reliability for qualitative data that assesses agreement among 2 raters with 0.81–1.00 representing near perfect agreement (McHugh, 2012). The usual Cohen’s Kappa is sensitive to low prevalence, which I expected here, giving lower than typical values, and furthermore it can be inflated by the presence of bias (Byrt et al., 1993). So, here I have relied on Prevalence-adjusted bias-adjusted kappa (PABAK), rather than Cohen’s Kappa. Coders discussed and recoded as necessary until they reach  $<.80$  reliability on all variables. Two independent coders coded 20% of the sample ( $N = 28$  cases). All variables were reliable above  $.81$  as measured by PABAK.

### ***Analysis Plan***

Much of the data collected was descriptive and qualitative in nature. To test Hypothesis 1, I used descriptive data to assess how often grooming issues were raised in forensic interviews across cases. I used qualitative examples to create a clear picture of the types of questions interviewers were using to elicit reports of grooming and how children were responding. To test Hypothesis 2, I used a mixed model ANCOVA to explore productivity by question type with age, gender, relationship to the perpetrator, and race/ethnicity entered as covariates. This method has been used by other experts in the field (see Klemfuss et al., 2014) to examine response productivity as a function of question type when controlling for other case factors. To test Hypothesis 3, I used descriptive data to identify whether these issues were being raised spontaneously or through interviewer questions. This mixed-method approach allowed me to compile a

table of qualitative examples and quantitative data to describe patterns (For a similar approach see St George et al., 2020).

I was further interested in differences in tactics used by perpetrators as a function of the child's age and their relationship to the perpetrator. As there is little empirical research to support specific predictions, this research was purely exploratory, and I had no specific hypotheses. To explore the influence of child age on proportion of grooming questions, I conducted a series of linear regressions (IV: child age; DV: proportion of grooming questions per case; proportion of grooming questions related to facilitating compliance; proportion of grooming questions related to secrecy maintenance) to explore whether there were systematic differences in questions related to grooming tactics by age of the child. I conducted additional ANOVAs (IV: child-perpetrator relationship, DV: proportion of grooming questions per case; proportion of grooming questions related to facilitating compliance; proportion of grooming questions related to secrecy maintenance) to test for differences in the proportion of questions about grooming tactics by relationship type.

## **Results**

### **H1. Grooming Questions Across Forensic Interviewers**

To test Hypothesis 1, I conducted descriptive analyses to assess how often grooming issues were raised in forensic interviews across cases. All analyses on grooming were separated into questions about overall grooming tactics (which include all grooming codes), tactics to facilitate compliance, and tactics to maintain secrecy, separately. Across 138 cases there were 14,575 question- answer pairs. Of these, 753 were related to grooming (4.3%). Contrary to my predictions, the majority of cases (117;

84.7%) contained at least one question or answer related to grooming tactics (Range = 0 - 43,  $M_{\text{per case}} = 5.48$ ,  $SD_{\text{per case}} = 6.42$ ).

## **H2. Question Type and Response Productivity**

To test Hypothesis 2 and explore the relationship between question type and response productivity for question-answer pairs related to grooming, I conducted an ANCOVA (IV: Question type, DV: Response productivity) controlling for all available case characteristics (child age, child gender, child race, perpetrator age, perpetrator race, perpetrator gender, child/perpetrator relationship). Wh- questions and how questions were combined for all analyses and non-questions (e.g.: “Okay.”) were removed from analyses. See Table 1 for definitions, examples, and descriptive statistics for question type. While I originally proposed controlling for abuse allegation frequency and severity, more than 25% of this data was missing (because children did not always disclose during the interview despite a founded suspicion or prior allegation of which no information was available). As a substantial amount of data was missing and these missing values were missing not at random (MNAR), imputation could not be used (see flowchart by Jakobsen et al., 2017). Further, listwise or pairwise deletion of these variables would have reduced my total sample size by over 25%. As such, these case characteristics were excluded as covariates.

After adjusting for child age, child gender, child race, perpetrator age, perpetrator race, and perpetrator gender, and child/ perpetrator relationship there was no statistically significant difference in response productivity by question type for questions related to grooming,  $F(7, 607) = 1.70$ ,  $p = .106$ ,  $\eta^2 = .019$ .

### **H3. Spontaneity vs. Prompted**

To test Hypothesis 3 and explore whether children spontaneously raised grooming issues or only after a grooming-related prompt from the interviewer, I conducted descriptive analyses. Of the 753 questions-answer pairs that addressed grooming, 637 (84.6%) were conversation elicited through a direct grooming related question from the interviewer. In the remaining cases, the child spontaneously raised a grooming related behavior (N = 116, 15.4%).

#### **Exploratory Age and Grooming Question Analyses**

To explore the impact of age on the proportion of questions related to grooming by case I conducted an exploratory linear regression (IV: Age, DV: proportion of grooming questions by case). There was no significant relationship between age of the child and the proportion of grooming questions overall,  $F(1, 136) = 3.80, p = .053, R^2 = .03$ ; grooming questions related to facilitating compliance,  $F(1, 136) = 3.52, p = .06, R^2 = .02$ ; nor grooming tactics to maintain secrecy,  $F(1, 136) = 0.19, p = .67, R^2 = .001$ .

#### **Exploratory Relationship to Perpetrator Analyses**

To explore the impact of the child's relationship to the perpetrator on the proportion of questions related to grooming by case I conducted an exploratory ANOVA (IV: Child Relationship to the perpetrator, DV: proportion of grooming questions by case). The child's relationship to their perpetrator was captured in 31 specific and distinct categories (see Appendix D). For the purpose of this analysis, I binned relationship to the perpetrator into the following 2 categories: parent or caregiver (N = 36) or other (N = 102). There was no significant relationship between the child's relationship to the perpetrator and the proportion of grooming questions overall,  $F(1, 136) = 1.41, p = .17,$



$\eta^2 = .014$ ; grooming questions related to facilitating compliance,  $F(1, 136) = 2.66, p = .11, \eta^2 = .02$ , nor grooming questions related to maintaining secrecy,  $F(1, 134) = 0.54, p = .46, \eta^2 = .004$ .

### **Qualitative Data and Examples**

Of the 753 grooming questions asked, 672 (89.24%) were questions about tactics to facilitate compliance and 82 (10.90%) were questions about tactics to maintain the secrecy of the abuse. Of question related to facilitating compliance, questions about to exposure to pornography were the most common (46.8% of all grooming questions), followed by boundary pushing (24.3%), teaching abnormal sex ideals (7.3%), other forms of grooming (6.1%), gift giving (4.5%), isolating the child (<1%), giving the child illicit substances (<1%), and favoritism (0%; see Table 2 and Table 3 for descriptive analyses and examples). Of tactics to maintain the secrecy of the abuse, the majority were related to requests not to tell (4.9% of all grooming questions), followed by other questions about nondisclosure (4.1%), and threats not to tell (2.3%).

### **Exposure to Pornography**

A total of 352 (46.8%) of questions or answers addressed exposure to pornography. In 82 cases (59%) a child discussed exposure to pornography with the interviewer. Questions about exposure to pornography were defined as a question-answer pair that addressed exposure to R-rated movies or movies and magazines depicting pornography. For example, the following question was asked to a 5-year-old girl who had made an allegation of abuse against her neighbor, “*Q: Oh, okay. Well, another question I always ask girls is if you've ever seen like movies or TV shows or things on the computer or tablet that show people doing private stuff or people with no clothes on? A: I have*

*seen some movies like that.*” Questions about exposure to pornography were often explicit like this and children rarely raised these issues on their own.

### **Boundary Pushing**

A total of 24.3% (N = 183) of grooming question or answers related to boundary pushing. Many cases (N = 87, 48%) contained at least one question or answer about boundary pushing. Boundary pushing was defined as a question or answer that addressed excessive tickling, hugging, wrestling, sitting on the perpetrators lap, and other boundary violation such as bathing, sleeping in the same bed as the child, and nudity around the child. These questions could often be described as falling into two distinct categories: abuse-as-a-game boundary violation (N = 58, 32%) or more overt boundary violations (N = 102, 56%). Abuse-as-a-game often involved questions about wrestling, tickling, or games that precede the abuse. For example, the following question-answer pair depicts a boundary violation conversation following the abuse-as-a-game framework, “*Q: Okay. Start at the beginning and tell me everything that happened so I can understand. A: He, my dad, keeps on touching me inappropriately and I tell him to stop and he keeps saying no. He says why don't we play a game, I keep saying no, and then he pushes me onto his bed, and yeah.*” These questions were particularly common among very young children and children who were abused by another child. Alternatively, boundary violation questions with older children tended to focus on more overt violations of privacy. These generally consisted of questions about the perpetrator invading the child's privacy through walking in on them in the shower or when the child was changing. For example, the following question-answer pair addresses an overt boundary violation:

*Q: So, you didn't think that they would believe you? So, tell me everything you remember about your stepdad molesting you. A: I was 7, and we, him, and my mom, and me and my stepsister, they took us to a water park that day. The, I was changing and my mom's like, hey, can you get out of my room? But he didn't want to leave. He said it was fine because he had a daughter too. He just stayed in the room. He just watched me get undressed. But, we got back home from the water park and I went to bed 'cause I was really tired. [Friend] went home to her mom 'cause her parents are separated and I went to bed in my room. And then my parents went home. My mom and [perpetrator] went to the other room to go to bed. And then later that night, [perpetrator], he came into my bed and he just started touching me. That was the end of it.*

As in this example, the child discusses an overt boundary violation, where the perpetrator invades upon the child's privacy before abusing her later that same day.

### **Teaching Abnormal Sex Ideals**

Questions about teaching abnormal sex ideals comprised 7.3% (N = 55) of all grooming questions asked. Nine cases (6.5%) involved a least one question or answer related to teaching abnormal sex ideals. These questions were defined as a question-answer pair that referenced conversations about sex outside of good touch bad touch conversations or age-appropriate sex education. The following depicts a conversation about abnormal sex ideals with a 17-year-old girl who had made an allegation of abuse against her teacher, “*Q: Tell me as best as you can remember what he told you. A: I remember that one time he told me have I lost my virginity yet, and then I said no, and then he asked me, he told me that if he could show me how good it is.*” These

conversations were common among older children. In most of these conversations the child disclosed the perpetrator asking about the child's virginity or providing details about their own sex lives, such as, "*Q: Tell me about the most inappropriate thing he ever said. A: Honestly, I think it's gonna be the thing, either, kinda the time when he said, "it wouldn't matter if you had sex a million times, I wouldn't judge you." Or the part when he said he had a one night stand, when he was married.*" These conversations happened outside the bounds of healthy parent-child conversations about sex education and often involved non-family members such as the example above between a 12-year-old child and her neighbor.

### **Other Forms of Grooming**

At times, children discussed other forms of grooming (N = 46, 6.1%) that did not fall into a distinct category captured through the coding guide. Questions or answers related to other forms of grooming appeared in 19 cases (13.8%). These questions primarily focused on emotional manipulation. Questions about emotional manipulation were defined as question-answer pairs in which the interviewer or child mentioned the perpetrator saying nice things to the child or complimenting them. For example, the following question-answer pair depicts a question about emotional manipulation from a grandfather, the perpetrator in the case:

*Q: Or did he ever say things about how smart you are or nice you are or the way you look? A: He'll like touch me right there to tickle [point at her ribs] but then like I'll go down on the ground cause it tickles and then like I kind of hit him cause like why is he touching me there. You know and then he doesn't do it anymore and so yeah I just went in the room with my sister."*

In many of these cases, children mentioned the perpetrator describing them as beautiful or intelligent. In this way, interviewers may have questioned children about emotional manipulation to highlight the ways the perpetrator has deliberately attempted to form an emotional bond with the child.

### **Gift Giving**

Children received 34 questions (4.5%) related to gift giving. Few children (N = 15, 10.9%) received at least one question or gave at least one answer related to gift giving. Gift giving was defined as the perpetrator giving the child a gift or money. The following depicts excerpts of a gift giving conversation between the interviewer and a 12-year-old child making an allegation of abuse against her neighbor:

*Q: So, [child], tell me some things he said about you. A: Well, he would say things like I'm really, I'm like a beautiful young girl, don't let people drag me down. Just the nice things, I'm not gonna say that was like creepy, but just everything that added all at once that kinda got a little creepy. When I wore, he like bought me this jewelry. No occasion, except he bought me little bracelets 'cause his daughter broke 'em, but after that he started buying me like really expensive jewelry. Not like diamonds or anything like that, but like 10 to 15 dollar chokers, expensive bracelets, things like that. Anyways, it was on no occasion so I was just kinda like, "Oh, that was nice," but then it all kinda started adding up, the way he seemed really nice.*

In many cases gift giving involved giving the child presents for no clear reason, while in other cases it involved more over manipulation through offering the child money or gifts for specific sexual behaviors, such as in the following example, “Q: So tell me everything

he said about that. A: He said he would hump me for a hundred dollars and I did but he didn't really do it." In this way, questions about gift giving elicited conversations about both subtle and overt forms of manipulation from the perpetrator.

### **Isolating the Child**

Questions about the perpetrator isolating the child were relatively uncommon and occurred in 5 cases (3.6%) across 6 question-answer pairs (<1%). Isolation was defined as attempts to isolate the child physically or emotionally from others. To illustrate, the following depicts an interviewer asking a 12-year-old child about isolation attempts. The child in this case had made an allegation of abuse against a neighbor:

*Q: And you mentioned that he would like hug you and? A: Yea, we were just sitting down. At first, I didn't really talk to him after like my sister introduced us; but then afterwards he was walking his dog at the park and I was trying to do a business. [hiccups] Sorry, I'm trynna like, my voice is starting to go away. Anyways, so I was trying to do business and and he said, "if you ever need to go to my house, I can help you there." ...It wasn't the same day, it was when we were making cards, but I was still there doing stuff like that at the computer and so I got up and he like hugs me and he's like, "oh is that weird?" and I'm like, "no," and then he comes up to me and he's like patting me on the shoulder and is like, "is that weird?" I was like, "no," and then he patted me on the head and was like, "is that weird?" I'm like, "no," and then he hugged me again."*

All isolation attempts in my sample involved physical not emotional isolation, much as in the example above.

## **Giving the Child Illicit Substances**

Two children (1.4%) received at least one question or gave at least one answer about illicit substances totaling 7 questions (<1%) across all cases. Questions about illicit substances were defined as a question-answer pair address the perpetrator giving the child drugs or alcohol or using drugs or alcohol with the child. For example, the follow excerpt depicts a conversation about illicit substance use between the child and perpetrator:

*Q: I know it's confusing. Tell me about the very first time you had sex with [perpetrator]. A: ... It was, but I never had done anything like that. Just meet someone on the internet and then just have sex with them. But he, when I first had sex with him I had told him that I was eighteen and I was over age and he told me he was 29. And he said that if as long as I was okay with it, I mean, then it's okay and then I don't know it just happened and then from then on it just kept going. Just more blur. Not really, don't really remember what happened but I remember after that he told he would smoke G and that's when like the whole trading thing came in. I'd have sex with him and he'd give me G.*

Children discussed illicit substance that were given both explicitly in exchange for the abuse, as in this example, as well as more subtly, likely to disorientate the child or earn their trust.

## **Favoritism**

No children were asked a question about favoritism. Favoritism was defined as questions addressing how the child was treated differently by the perpetrator.

### **Requests Not to Tell**

Questions or answers about requests not to tell occurred in 17% (N = 24) of cases. Across these cases, 37 questions or answers were related to requests not to tell (4.9% of all grooming questions). For example, the following question-answer pair depicts a conversation about requests not to tell between the interviewer and a 6-year-old child, “*Q: Okay. Well, tell me everything you remember about what [perpetrator] said when you were in his room that time. A: All he did was say don't tell anyone. Then my mom, I was with her for a little bit at [state].. So then we went back here and she told my Grandma. Then my mom always says tell me everything and stuff. So I told her.*” At times, conversations about requests not to tell involved language about “secret keeping” between the perpetrator and child.

### **Other Questions About Nondisclosure**

Nineteen children (13.8%) discussed other issues related to nondisclosure. These questions and answers comprised 4.1% (N = 31) of all grooming questions. For example, an interviewer asked the following question to a 13-year-old child, “*Q: Did he say something else to you about telling? A.[shakes head].*” These conversations were often initiated with a very general question about not telling.

### **Threats Not to Tell**

Children in 10 cases (7.2%) were asked at least one question about threats not to tell. These questions comprised 2.3% (N = 17) of questions related to grooming. For example, the following child discusses a threat not to tell after a yes/no question from the interviewer, “*Q: Did something make you feel like you couldn't tell your mom or nana right away? A: Yeah ,because he said if you tell nana or your mom, I will punch you next*



*time you would, you would come here. (I see) I didn't tell him I tell my mom and my nana.*” Threats not to tell involved a combination of physical violence (e.g.: threatening the child with a knife) and social threats related to either the child or perpetrator (e.g.: getting in trouble). For example: “*Q: Now did [perpetrator] want someone to know about what happened? A: No. She's all "don't tell your dad or your mom or my grandma." I'm all, "why not?" " 'Cause I'll get in trouble." "Oh, well, okay [shoulder shrug]," but so my dad asked what happened, so I told him everything I knew.*” Discussions about threats of physical violence were more common when the perpetrator was also a child.

### **Study 1 Discussion**

Through this study, I examined how forensic interviewers address grooming during the investigation process for children who have made an initial allegation of CSA. As grooming is an integral part of the victimization process, it is important to understand how forensic interviewers are talking to children about this aspect of abuse. Contrary to hypotheses, forensic interviewers asked children about grooming in over 80% of cases – more than was predicted. This certainly reflects a sensitivity from forensic interviewers as to the nature of grooming as an important aspect of child victimization. Of note, nearly half of these questions directed to children were about exposure to pornography. This may be purposeful, as exposure to pornography is a form of child abuse on its own (Matthews & Collin-Vezina, 2017). In this way, it may be important for forensic interviewers to highlight exposure to pornography as a distinct form of abuse beyond grooming. As the forensic interview plays a key role in shaping the prosecutors’ charging decisions, it may be important for forensic interviewers to devote time and attention to eliciting reports of this form of abuse (Krueger, 2016). Still, many of the cases in my

sample involved allegations of more intrusive forms of abuse and repeated abuse where we would expect grooming to have occurred, in some capacity, to prevent disclosure (Stolzenberg & Lyon, 2014a). My research suggests forensic interviewers should consider asking about other forms of grooming which may be neglected during the investigation and prosecution process in CSA cases. This includes asking children about favoritism, giving the child illicit substances, and isolating the child (or attempts to do so) when applicable to those cases (Bennett & O'Donohue, 2014). This would allow for interviewers to tap into the nuanced ways in which grooming often presents beyond exposure to pornography.

Surprisingly, there were no differences in response productivity for questions related to grooming by question type. That is, children seemed to give generally elaborative responses across all question types. It is possible this is because forensic interviewers are building strong rapport with children before asking allegation specific questions (Saywitz et al., 2015). Strong rapport building has been associated with improved communication (Davis and Bottoms, 2002) and recall of more correct information (Collins et al., 2011) in child forensic interviews. In these cases, children may feel comfortable giving responses without much prompting or narrative guidance. Additionally, grooming questions, when asked, were generally asked at the end of an interview. Again, at this point in the interview process, children likely feel more comfortable as they have already provided the majority of their abuse narrative. As such, it is possible that we might see differences in response productivity by question type for grooming questions asked early on in the interview process or after inadequate rapport building.

The majority of conversations between the child and interviewer, related to grooming, occurred after a focused interviewer question. In only 13% of cases did children raise grooming on their own. This suggests that interviewers may need to be direct and explicit when asking about grooming, and that children may not discuss it unless explicitly asked to do so. At times, children need adequate cues that specifically reference aspects of an abuse incident in order to provide informative responses about issues which may not arise naturally through more general “tell-me-everything” prompts (Stolzenberg et al., 2021). In this way, children may not raise a topic unless asked to do so. Despite a lack of differences in response productivity by question type, forensic interviewers may benefit from using wh- questions when asking about grooming, as it appears children need to be directly prompted to raise grooming issues and may not do so on their own. This may be because grooming is a subtle abuse tactic that tends to precede more invasive abuse (Winters et al., 2021). As such, it may be difficult for children to identify grooming and grooming behaviors as part of the abuse process, and something worth reporting to interviewers. Also, researchers should continue to examine productive methods for eliciting these details; perhaps experimentally in an analogue laboratory study first to determine what works.

Furthermore, there was no impact of age on grooming questions asked. It is likely that children of different ages experience different forms of grooming (Lanning, 2010). For example, giving a child an illicit substance is less likely to happen among very young children when compared to teenagers. While the overall proportion of grooming questions did not vary with the child’s age, it is possible that the substance of these questions (i.e. the form of grooming addressed) did differ with age. This will be an

important avenue for future research. Still, older children are able to provide more elaborative and detailed reports of abuse than very young children (Klemfuss et al., 2016). Forensic interviewers could capitalize on their developmental maturities through asking more, or more detailed, questions related to the grooming process to older children so as to develop a complete picture of the abuse.

Finally, the proportion of questions related to grooming did not vary by the child's relationship to their perpetrator. Intrafamilial and extrafamilial grooming present differently. That is, extrafamilial sexual abusers used gifts more often than intrafamilial abusers, while intrafamilial abusers are more likely to use conversations about nondisclosure (Fischer & McDonald, 1998). Again, while there were no differences in the proportion of grooming questions by the child's relationship to the perpetrator (caregiver or non-caregiver) it is certainly possible that the content of these questions did vary. This will be an important avenue for researchers to examine.

Of note, the data used in this study came from a single, large district in Arizona. Evidence suggests that there is a great deal of variability in forensic interview training and protocol used in different jurisdictions of the U.S. alone (Rivard & Compo, 2017). As such the generalizability of these findings may be limited and questioning practices related to grooming may present differently in different jurisdictions, where interviewers may receive different forms of training. Little research has compared the effectiveness of different structured protocols (Ten-Step, Child First, etc.), though structured protocols lead to significantly higher quality interviews than those that are unstructured (Orbach et al., 2000). This may be particularly true of the forensic interviews in this sample which were drawn from one hospital with two skilled and advanced forensic interviewers,

trained using the same modified NICHD protocol. While experience alone has not been associated with higher quality interviews (Powell et al., 2012), consistent feedback has been (Lamb et al., 2002). The interviewers at PCH receive frequent supervisory feedback, likely leading to high performance and strong interviews. As such, these findings may not apply indiscriminately to other jurisdictions with different training protocol or models of practice.

Furthermore, I was only able to examine cases that were transcribed and checked at the pre-set cutoff point for starting my coding (although the overarching project that allowed for interview collection was not yet complete). This limited my sample to less than half of all available cases for the whole sample. As a result, these cases may not have been a perfect representation of the entire sample. This subsample contains on average younger offenders and proportionately more male victims than the complete sample. Both the age and gender of the child impact the informativeness of their responses and the ways in which they answer interviewer questions (Lamb & Garretson, 2003). For this reason, the subsample used in this research may not be entirely representative of cases across the district. It will be important to examine the entire sample in future research.

Collectively my research both evaluates current practices and provides direction for forensic interviewers in these cases. Forensic interviewers are often addressing grooming in these cases and frequently address exposure to pornography. Interviewers may want to consider giving proportionately more attention to some of the more subtle grooming tactics beyond exposure to pornography - particularly when talking with older children and in cases involving intrafamilial abuse, to create a detailed and complete

picture of the child's allegation. Still, it is possible that attorneys are addressing grooming in these cases in ways that forensic interviewers are not. As such, across Study 2 I have examined how attorneys are talking to children about the grooming process in prosecuted cases of CSA.

### **Study 2: Grooming in Prosecuted Cases of CSA**

Researchers suggests that grooming is foundational for understanding complex and counterintuitive case characteristics like delayed disclosure in CSA cases (Craven et al., 2006). Yet, little is known about how children are questioned about grooming during criminal trials investigating CSA allegations. It is possible that grooming is not being addressed during attorney questioning in CSA trials. Without a reference to grooming, jurors may struggle to understand and attribute counterintuitive case characteristics to the ways in which a child was seduced into abuse. The goal of Study 2 was to explore whether and how grooming issues were being raised and addressed in court. This research lays the foundation for guiding the content of attorney questions. This study answered the questions: Are defense and prosecuting attorneys eliciting reports of grooming in court? If so, which questions elicit the most productive reports from children?

#### ***Hypotheses***

**H1.** Attorneys will elicit reports of grooming in court in less than 25% of cases.

**H2.** Prosecuting attorneys will raise grooming more often when compared to defense attorneys because prosecutors will be motivated to draw jurors' attention to factors that may have prevented disclosure (i.e. grooming tactics).

**H3.** When attorneys do raise grooming issues in court, WH- questions will yield the most productive reports from children.

**H4.** I will conduct exploratory analyses to examine the relationship between the age of the child and questions related to grooming.

**H5.** I will conduct exploratory analyses to examine the relationship between the child-perpetrator relationship and questions related to grooming.

### ***Method***

In collaboration with the Maricopa County Attorney's Office (MCAO), I have a database of transcripts of 134 testimonies from CSA cases occurring between January 2005 and August 2015 in Maricopa County, Arizona. My advisor contacted and paid court reporters to provide us with transcripts of complete cases (64% response rate). She received 214 complete victim's testimonies across 142 cases (some cases included multiple victims); the remaining court reporters were non-responsive. Of these 214 testimonies, 134 involve minors at the time of testimony (across 101 cases;  $M_{\text{victim per case}} = 1.33$ ,  $SD_{\text{victim per case}} = .65$ ), whereas the remaining transcripts involve young adults testifying about alleged victimization during their childhood.

Cases were included if they had complete transcripts, involve a minor at time of testimony, and involve at least a single charge of Child Sexual Conduct with a Minor (A.R.S.13-1405), Child Molestation (A.R.S. 13-1410), or Sex Abuse (A.R.S. 13-1404). The children included in this sample ranged in age from 5-17 ( $M = 12.48$ ,  $SD = 3.34$ ). The majority of defendants were male (99%) and the majority of victims were female (90%). In many of the cases the defendant was the child's parent or caregiver (40%). In the remaining cases the defendant was either another family member (26%), a family

friend or familiar adult (29%), or a stranger (5%). Children's allegations in these cases included penetration (34%), oral copulation or genital contact (14%), and less severe abuse such as exposure to pornography (52%). We contacted and paid court reporters to share transcripts of completed cases; 73 court reporters were contacted and 47 responded (64% response rate). About a third (40%) of the children were White, 26% were Latinx/Hispanic, 15% were Black, Asian, or Native, and 25% were of unknown race or ethnicity. Forty-five percent of the defendants were White, 40% were Latinx/Hispanic, 13% were Black, Asian, or Native, and 2% were of unknown race or ethnicity. Of note, several of these cases involved a full recantation (N = 8, 6%) of abuse claims.<sup>1</sup>

## **Measures**

Using thematic analysis, two trained independent coders coded all transcripts for grooming issues (see Appendix F). That is, *form of grooming was coded for* using a modified version of the 13 grooming behaviors identified by Bennett and W. O'Donohue (2014) as well as sensitivity to forms of grooming that have not been previously documented. These grooming tactics was further coded as grooming to facilitate compliance and grooming to maintain secrecy. *Attorney question type was coded* as 1) yes-no, 2) forced-choice, 3) tag 4) negative term, 4) WH- 5) How, 6) Statement questions, 7) Do you know/remember/ can you, 8) tell me more/about, 9) not a question, 10) unclassified (see Appendix E for definitions and examples). Coders double coded 20% of transcripts, assess PABAK to ensure they reach >.80 reliability across all

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<sup>1</sup> A child's testimony serves as the main form of evidence in many CSA cases. As such, many cases involving full recantations of a CSA claim are weeded out before the prosecution phase of an investigation. As grooming may predict a recantation, it is possible then that cases with high levels of grooming will not be present in my sample. As my sample included several cases involving recantation, my sample is inclusive of cases that may have high levels of grooming.



variables (see Study 1 for a detailed report of this approach) and recode as necessary to reach reliability. All variables were reliable above .80 as measured by PABAK across 20% of the sample (N = 27). I further enter information related to questioner as prosecutor or defense, age of the child, gender of the child, relationship to the perpetrator, severity of abuse, frequency of abuse, race/ethnicity of the child, and verdict as noted in the case file information provided to us by MCAO. *Response-productivity* was coded for the number of words as a proxy for details and informativeness as has been deemed appropriate in prior work (Poole & Dickinson, 2000). I used Excel to automatically calculate a word count for each response as a measure of response productivity.

### ***Analysis Plan***

Much of the data collected was descriptive in nature. To address Hypothesis 1, I assessed how often grooming issues were raised by defense and prosecuting attorneys across cases using descriptive data, providing detailed qualitative examples for each form of grooming raised by attorneys (see St. George et al., 2021 for similar methodology). To address Hypothesis 2, I conducted a t-test (IV: attorney type, DV: proportion of grooming questions by case) to compare the rates at which prosecuting and defense attorneys raise grooming issues. Finally, to test Hypothesis 3, I used a mixed-model ANCOVA to assess the productivity of different question-types, accounting for numerous case characteristics (relationship to perpetrator, child age, child gender, frequency and severity of abuse, verdict; see Study 1 for similar approach).

I was further interested in differences in grooming to increase compliance and grooming to maintain secrecy as a function of the child's age, much as in Study 1. This research was, again, purely exploratory so I had no preexisting hypotheses. To explore

the influence of child age on questions related to grooming, I conducted a linear regression (IV: child age, DV: proportion of questions about grooming overall by prosecuting and defense attorneys, respectively; proportion of grooming questions about tactics to increase compliance by prosecuting and defense attorneys, respectively; proportion of grooming questions about tactics to maintain secrecy by prosecuting and defense attorneys, respectively).

I was further interested in differences in the proportion of questions related to grooming by case as a function of the child's relationship to the perpetrator, much as in Study 1. I conducted a series of ANOVAs (IV: child-perpetrator relationship, DV: proportion of questions about grooming tactics overall by prosecuting and defense attorneys, respectively; proportion of question's related to grooming tactics to facilitate compliance by prosecuting and defense attorneys, respectively; proportion of question's related to grooming tactics to maintain secrecy by prosecuting and defense attorneys, respectively) to test for differences in questions related to grooming tactics by relationship type.

## **Results**

Across the 134 cases in my sample, there were a total of 61,689 question-answer pairs. The prosecution asked more questions overall (Range = 17-1095,  $M_{per\ case} = 273.25$ ,  $SD_{per\ case} = 199.13$ ) than did the defense (Range = 0-1020,  $M_{per\ case} = 169.37$   $SD_{per\ case} = 152.81$ ).

### **H1. Frequency of Grooming Issues**

To test Hypothesis 1, I conducted descriptive analyses to explore the frequency with which attorneys raised grooming issues. All analyses on grooming were separated

into questions about grooming tactics in general (which included every coding category), tactics to facilitate compliance, and tactics to maintain secrecy, separately. Overall, grooming issues were raised in 62.7% of cases ( $N = 84$ ). That is, 62.7% of cases contained at least one question-answer pair that across 1083 (1.8%) grooming question-answer pairs total (see Table 2 and Table 4 for descriptive statistics).

## **H2. Proportion of Grooming Questions by Attorney**

Defense attorneys raised grooming in 41 cases (30.6%) while prosecuting attorneys raised grooming in 71 cases (53.0%; see Table 5). To explore differences in the proportion with which attorney's raised grooming issues, I conducted a t-test (IV: Attorney, DV: proportion of grooming questions by case). There was no significant difference in the proportion with which attorney's raised grooming issues overall,  $t(133) = 1.110, p = .134, Cohen's d = .0386$ . Further, there were no differences in the proportion with which they raised grooming issues to increase compliance,  $t(133) = .727, p = .234, Cohen's d = .0338$  or grooming issues to maintain the secrecy of the abuse:  $t(133) = 1.481, p = .070, Cohen's d = .0118$ .

## **H3. Productivity of Question Type Related to Grooming**

To test Hypothesis 3 and explore the relationship between question type and response productivity for question-answer pairs related to grooming, I conducted an ANCOVA (IV: question type, DV: response productivity) controlling for all available case characteristics with less than 25% missing data (see Study 1 for justification for this approach; child age, child gender, perpetrator gender, child-perpetrator relationship, abuse frequency, abuse severity, case outcome). Again, WH- questions and How questions were collapsed into one question type and non-questions (e.g.: "Okay.") were

removed from analyses. There was a statistically significant difference in response productivity by question type when controlling for case characteristics,  $F(7, 906) = 22.97$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .151$ . To explore this effect, I conducted Estimates of Marginal Means comparisons with a Bonferroni correction (see Table 6 for means).

### **Post Hoc Analyses WH- Questions Related to Grooming**

Wh- questions related to grooming elicited more elaborative responses than Yes/no ( $M_{diff} = 12.55$ ,  $SE = 1.38$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = 8.23 - 16.87), Tag questions ( $M_{diff} = 15.29$ ,  $SE = 2.34$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = 7.95 - 22.64 ), statement questions ( $M_{diff} = 13.70$ ,  $SE = 21.58$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = 8.74 - 18.65) and do you know/remember/can you questions ( $M_{diff} = 8.39$ ,  $SE = 2.01$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = 2.08 - 14.70) but fewer elaborations than tell me more questions ( $M_{diff} = -17.82$ ,  $SE = 4.12$ ,  $p = .002$ , 95% CI = -30.74 - -4.90).

### **Post Hoc Analyses Tell Me More Questions Related to Grooming**

Tell me more questions related to grooming elicited more elaborate response than yes/no questions ( $M_{diff} = 30.37$ ,  $SE = 4.09$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = 17.55 - 43.20), forced choice questions ( $M_{diff} = 25.77$ ,  $SE = 5.00$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = 10.10 - 41.43), tag questions ( $M_{diff} = 33.16$ ,  $SE = 4.52$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = 18.97 - 47.35), WH-questions ( $M_{diff} = 17.82$ ,  $SE = 4.12$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = 4.90 - 30.74), statement questions ( $M_{diff} = 31.52$ ,  $SE = 4.16$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = 18.47 - 44.57), and do you know/remember/can you questions ( $M_{diff} = 26.21$ ,  $SE = 4.35$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI = -12.59 - 39.84). All other pairwise comparisons for questions related to grooming were not statistically significant.

### **Exploratory Age Analyses**

To explore the relationship between the age of the child and questions related to grooming tactics, I conducted a linear regression (IV: child age, DV: proportion of grooming questions from the prosecution and defense, respectively). Prosecutors did not vary the proportion of overall grooming questions by the age of the child,  $F(1, 132) = 1.06, p = .30 (R^2 = .008)$  nor did defense attorneys,  $F(1, 132) = .067, p = .796 (R^2 = .001)$ . I then examined grooming questions about tactics to facilitate compliance and tactics to maintain secrecy, separately. Neither prosecutors  $F(1,132) = 0.397, p = .530 (R^2 = .003)$  nor defense attorneys  $F(1, 132) = 0.015, p = .904 (R^2 = .000)$  varied the proportion of questions about tactics to facilitate compliance per case by the age of the child. Prosecutors did vary the proportion of inducement to secrecy questions by the age of the child  $F(1, 132) = 4.47, p = 0.04$ . The age of the child accounted for 3.3% of the explained variability in proportion of inducement to secrecy questions such that as child age increased so did the proportion of questions related to grooming tactics to maintain secrecy. Defense attorneys did not vary the proportion of inducement to secrecy questions by the age of the child,  $F(1, 132) = 0.359, p = .55 (R^2 = .003)$ .

### **Exploratory Child-Perpetrator Relationship Analyses**

To explore the relationship between the perpetrator's relationship with the child and the proportion of grooming questions asked to the child, I conducted an ANOVA (IV: relationship to the child, DV: proportion of grooming questions by prosecutors and defense attorneys, respectively). The child's relationship to the perpetrator spanned 31 unique codes (see Appendix H). These codes were binned into 2 categories: a parent or caregiver (N = 53) or not a parent or caregiver (N = 81).

Prosecutors did not vary the proportion of grooming questions overall by the child's relationship to the perpetrator,  $F(1, 132) = 0.238, p = .627, \eta^2 = .002$  nor did defense attorneys,  $F(1, 132) = 0.03, p = .862, \eta^2 < 0.001$ . I then examined the proportion of questions about tactics to facilitate compliance and the proportion of questions about secrecy maintenance, separately. Neither prosecutors nor defense attorneys varied the proportion of questions about tactics to facilitate compliance by the child's relationship to the perpetrator,  $F(1, 132) = 0.01, p = .92, \eta^2 < .001$ ;  $F(1, 132) = 0.10, p = .757, \eta^2 = .001$ . Further, neither prosecutors nor defense attorneys varied the proportion of question related to maintaining the secrecy of the abuse by the child's relationship to the perpetrator  $F(1, 134) = 3.29, p = .072, \eta^2 = .024$ ;  $F(1, 134) = 0.28, p = .599, \eta^2 = .002$ .

### **Qualitative Data and Examples**

Of all grooming questions, the majority addressed grooming to facilitate compliance (N = 911, 84.9%) and a minority addressed grooming to maintain secrecy (N = 164, 15.1%). Questions related to exposure to pornography were the most common (27.4% of all grooming questions), followed by boundary pushing (19.0%), giving the child gifts (12.4%), teaching abnormal sex ideals (10.4%), providing the child with illicit substances (7.0%), other form of grooming (4.5%), favoritism (2.5%), and isolation (2.0%; see Table 1 and Table 4 for descriptive statistics). Of tactics to maintain the child's secrecy, the majority were related to threats not to tell (7.7% of all grooming questions), followed by requests not to tell (5.0%), and other questions about nondisclosure (3.9%). Definitions for each category were consistent with those described in Study 1 (see Appendix F for coding guide).

## **Exposure to Pornography**

Similar to the forensic interviews, questions about exposure to pornography (N = 297, 27.4%) were fairly common occurring in 25 cases (18.7%). For example, the following question was asked by a prosecutor to a 6-year-old girl, “*Q. Have you ever seen pictures in a book or a magazine or maybe a movie of a grown-up without any clothes on? A. I remember, yes, I have seen -- I actually have seen them on movie.*” These questions revealed some level of awareness of grooming tactics that may have been used in the case.

## **Boundary Pushing**

Questions about boundary pushing (N = 209, 19%) occurred in 29 cases (21.6%). These questions generally fell into two distinct categories, similar to the forensic interviews: abuse-as-a-game boundary violation (N = 64, 30.6%) and overt boundary violations (N = 139, 66.5%; see Study 1 results for definitions). Again, abuse-as-a-game framework questions were common among younger children. For example, the following question depicts an exchange between a prosecuting attorney and a 6-year-old girl who made an allegation of abuse against her father, “*Q. When he was a nice dad, then he would tickle you? A. And then he would always play horsey, and then he played a lots of fun stuff, and then he turned into a bad guy.*” Conversations about overt boundary violations often involved questions about purposeful invasions of privacy. In the following example a prosecuting attorney is asking an 11-year-old girl about an overt boundary violation. The defendant in this case was a family friend who the child had known for several years: “*Q. Did anything ever happen with you and [defendant] in the shower? A. yeah. sometimes we took showers. We didn't do any physical action, I*

believe. *Q. Okay. A. He would help me wash my hair because when I wash my hair, I don't scrub it all the way through.*" Question-answer pairs addressing overt boundary violation generally adopted a different framework (abuse-as-a-game or overt violations) based on the age of the child.

### **Teaching Abnormal Sex Ideals**

Nine children (6.7%) received at least one question addressing abnormal sex ideals (N = 113, 10.4%). For example, the following question was asked by a prosecutor to a 10-year-old girl who made an allegation of abuse against a family friend, "*Q. And do you know how come he told you that? How to use [a vibrator]? A. No. I don't know why.*" These questions were particularly common among older children and, similar to the forensic interviews, generally focused on the defendant teaching a child how to use sex toys or the defendant telling a child about their own sex lives.

### **Other Forms of Grooming**

Six children (4.5%) received at least one question addressing other ways the perpetrator had used grooming to facilitate compliance (N = 61, 5.6%). These questions often focused on emotional manipulation (N = 11, 18%) through telling the child how they felt about them or complimenting them such as in the following question from a prosecuting attorney: "*Q. and then what happened? A. He kept telling me how much he loved me, but not in the way that I loved him. and then my mom way came up the stairs and saw him in my room, and he quickly wrapped his arms around me so it didn't seem weird or anything. And she said it was time for me to go to bed. So he left and went into his room.*" Other forms of grooming also captured general questions about what the defendant did that the child liked. For example, the following series of questions from a



prosecuting attorney were asked to a 9-year-old boy: “*Q. Except when he used to touch you that you didn't like. But otherwise did you like [defendant]? a. Yes. Q. How come? A. Because he sometime used to -- sometimes he used to do nice things to us, sometimes.*”

The focus of these questions mirrored those asked during forensic interviews. In both cases, questioners highlighted emotional manipulation as another form of grooming as well as highlighting behaviors that contributed to a general positive relationship between the perpetrator and the child.

### **Gift Giving**

Twenty -nine children (21.6%) received at least one question related to gift giving (N = 134, 12.4%). These questions generally emphasized giving a physical gift before the abuse began. In the following example a prosecuting attorney asks a series of questions addressing gifts given to a six-year-old who had made an allegation of attempted intercourse by her father: “*Q. So did he buy some things? A. Yes. Q. What kind of things did he buy you? A. When I was over, I actually listened to him. Q. And then what happened when you listened to him? A. He buyed me a lots of good stuff. Q. What did he buy you? A. Ponies, crayons, coloring books, barbies, mermaid toys.*” In this way, attorneys may highlight gift giving as a more obvious and overt form of grooming.

### **Isolation**

Five children (3.7%) received at least one question about the defendants attempts to emotionally or physically isolate the child. There was a total of 22 (2.2%) questions addressing isolation. For example, in the following excerpt, a prosecuting attorney asked a child about the perpetrator physically isolating her. The child in the case was 11-years-old and the defendant was her neighbor who frequently took her on vacations alone,” *Q.*

*Did you go on any other trips with [defendant]? A. Yeah...This was the trip to Orlando, Florida. And he took me to Disney world and Sea World. And we went -- and then we went to Daytona Beach because that's where he actually lived. We just stayed in the hotel for two nights. And he took me to the beach and he took me to the dog races.”* In many of these cases the perpetrator, who was usually a close familial adult, physically isolated the child through taking them on trips alone to places they enjoyed (e.g.: theme parks, holidays, etc.).

### **Illicit Substances**

Five children (3.7%) received one of more questions about the defendant providing them with drugs/alcohol or using drugs/alcohol with them (N = 76, 7.0%). For example, an 11-year-old girl was asked by a prosecutor about illicit substance use with her neighbor, the defendant in the case: *“Q. Now, did [defendant] ever make you drink anything that you didn't like? A. Yeah. He made me drink bud light.”* Similar to the forensic interviews, these questions covered an overt exchange of illicit substances for abuse as well as substance use with a child to either disorient them or gain their trust.

### **Favoritism**

Ten children (7.5%) received at least one question about favoritism (N = 27, 2.5%). These questions often addressed ways in which the victim was treated differently than siblings or friends. For example, a prosecuting attorney asked a 10-year-old girl, *““Q. Do you think he treated you like a favorite, like his favorite granddaughter? A. Yeah. Q. In what way? A. Like almost every time we would go to the store he would buy me, like, candy. Q. Anything else that he would do to show you that you were his favorite? A. Usually when he takes other kids to the VFW he usually doesn't buy them*

*soda, but almost every time I go, he is buying me sodas.*” Conversations surrounding favoritism often simultaneously mentioned gift giving that signaled to the child that they were a favorite.

### **Requests Not to Tell**

Forty-one children (30.6%) received at least one question addressing a defendant’s request not to tell. Across these cases, there were 54 (4.0%) questions related to requests not to tell. For example, a prosecutor asked an 11-year-old girl, “*Q. Okay. Then what happened? A. Then the second time he came in he whispered not to tell anyone.*” Again, these conversations were similar in structure and content to the forensic interviews and involved discussions about a secret between the defendant and child without a mention of consequences.

### **Other Questions About Nondisclosure**

Across 4 cases (3.0%) there were 61 (5.6%) questions that were described as other questions about nondisclosure. This category captured broad questions that neither directly mentioned a request or consequences such as in the following prosecutor’s question, “*Q. Did [defendant] ever tell you that -- did he ever say anything to you about talking about this or not talking about it? A. I don’t know.*” These broad questions were often followed by more specific questions about requests or threats not to tell.

### **Threats Not to Tell**

Attorneys asked children 84 questions (7.4%) about defendant’s threats not to tell. Children in 32 cases (23.9%) received a least one question addressing threats not to tell. To illustrate, in the following example a 10-year-old child provides a spontaneous description of the defendant’s threats following a prosecutor’s question, “*Q. What was*

*the very next thing that happened? A. Well, he put my leg up, and then my mom came. And then he said if I tell my parents, then he is going to take me somewhere.”* Similar to the forensic interviews, conversations about threats not to tell involves a combination of both social and physical threats.

## **Study 2 Discussion**

It was important to explore how attorneys were addressing grooming during the prosecution process for children who have made an allegation of CSA. Much like the forensic interviews, contrary to hypotheses attorneys raised grooming in over 60% of cases – more than was predicted. This suggests that, again, attorneys have some level of understanding of the role that grooming plays in the larger victimization process. Still, of all questions attorney’s asked, only 1.8% were questions related to grooming. This suggests that while attorneys are mentioning grooming in many of these cases, it is given proportionately little attention. Establishing if and how a child has been groomed into abuse is an important element of establishing child credibility. It can help explain why a child would delay disclosure or recant an allegation of abuse as well as providing a framework for understanding the complex child perpetrator dynamics that often occur in CSA cases (McElvaney, 2019).

Researchers suggest that attorneys devote a substantial amount of time to establishing and attacking child credibility in these cases. Indeed, across an examination of 134 cases of CSA, 90% of attorney questions could be described as assessing the credibility of a child’s allegation (Denne et al., 2019). While attorneys certainly devote time to establishing credibility, grooming as an aspect of credibility seems to be somewhat neglected in court. My research suggests that attorneys may want to consider

spending proportionately more time addressing grooming, in an effort to shape perceptions of child credibility and explain their behavior. Alternatively, devoting this small proportion of testimony to grooming may be sufficient as attorney questioning may be in direct response to case factors. Instead, how it is discussed and whether it is discussed in appropriate cases may be of more importance. This may be an important avenue for future research to explore characteristics of cases where grooming is given proportionality more attention.

Unexpectedly, there were no differences in the proportion with which defense and prosecuting attorneys raised grooming issues. This may be because, on average, grooming was given little proportional attention across cases (i.e., there may be a floor effect). Less than 2% of question-answer pairs addressed grooming. As grooming provides an important framework for understanding a child's behavior within their abuse narrative (Kaufman et al., 1998), it may be important for attorneys to highlight the ways grooming has or has not occurred. For example, prosecutors could use grooming to elucidate the unintuitive ways a child may react post abuse, particularly in cases of repeated abuse where some form of grooming likely occurred to prevent immediate disclosure (McElvaney, 2017). I would expect prosecutors to be invested and motivated in raising grooming to explain a child's behavior to jurors to bolster their credibility and provide coherence to their abuse narratives.

Contrary to my sample of forensic interviews, "tell me more" questions elicited the most elaborative responses from children related to grooming. This finding is in keeping with prior research which suggests open invitations elicit the most elaborative, narrative responses from children above many other question types (Lamb et al., 2011).

Still researchers suggest that attorneys rarely use tell me more questions (Andrews et al., 2015), particularly because they are motivated to control witness response in an effort to guide and develop their own case (Saywitz et al., 2002). As my research suggests children provide the most elaborative responses to these kinds of questions, I would encourage attorneys to utilize tell me more questions when talking to children about grooming in court.

Furthermore, the differences in questioning practices between attorneys and forensic interviewers may speak to their different purposes. As noted, attorney's will be motivated to control their witnesses and elicit a predictable narrative from the child (Saywitz et al., 2002). In comparison, forensic interviewers are tasked with eliciting complete, detailed, and reliable reports (Newlin et al., 2015). Arguably both attorneys (likely prosecutors) and interviewers should be interested in eliciting a clear and comprehensive picture of the abuse. We want to hear what children have to say, both during an investigation and in court. As such, forensic interviewer guidelines for best practices when questioning children may be relevant for attorneys who try these cases as well.

Furthermore, my results suggest that prosecutors, more so than defense attorneys, apply some level of developmental sensitivity when questioning children about grooming. That is, as child age increased, so did the proportion of questions from prosecutors related to grooming tactics to maintain secrecy. Prosecutors, at times, tailor their questioning practices to reflect the developmental maturity of older children – a trend supported by prior research (Stolzenberg & Lyon, 2014). Prosecutors may be motivated to tailor their question content (Denne et al., 2020) and style (Andrew er al.,

2014) to match the developmental capacities of children as they will naturally be more favorable towards the child than the defense. In contrast, defense attorneys may be interested in exploiting child vulnerabilities and limited developmental capacity in strategic ways through both question content and question style related to the grooming process (Crenshaw et al., 2016). It is also possible that prosecutors ask young children more questions about grooming because grooming is more apparent or more common in these cases. This will be an important avenue for future research to investigate.

Still, prosecutors were somewhat inconsistent in developmentally appropriate strategies and did not tailor their grooming questions related to grooming to facilitate compliance. This finding provides further support to claims that the challenges children face during testimony may not be limited to cross-examination (Andrews et al., 2014). Prosecutors and defense attorneys alike may be missing an important opportunity to tailor their questioning practices related to grooming by the age of the child. Doing so may be a useful strategy to appropriately reflect child developmental trends, the child's ability to provide a coherent and detailed abuse narrative, as well as differences in grooming tactics used with different age groups (Winters & Jeglic, 2016).

Much like the forensic interviews, neither prosecutors nor defense attorneys varied the proportion of grooming questions by the child-perpetrator relationship. This may be because attorneys are not sensitive to the ways in which grooming may manifest differently across different child-perpetrator relationships. For instance, grooming presents differently when the child has a close or familial bond with their perpetrator and in cases with repeated abuse, which tend to be cases of intrafamilial abuse (Fischer & McDonald, 1998).

Attorneys should consider tailoring their questioning practices related to grooming to reflect probable and possible differences in the way a perpetrator has engaged the child in abuse. This could mean asking children more grooming-related questions in cases of intrafamilial abuse where grooming is more likely to have occurred. Instead, attorneys indiscriminately raised grooming in these cases in ways that did not reflect probable trends in how grooming could have or may have occurred. As grooming behaviors are complex, and can present similarly to many caregiving behaviors, it may be difficult for attorneys to define and identify these behaviors as inherently predatory.

I suggest prosecutors consider how the child's relationship with their perpetrator can be used to frame these behaviors as problematic. For example, in one of many cases described above, the child's neighbor showered with her and washed her hair. These normal caregiving behaviors are more readily identifiable as grooming within a neighbor-child relationship when compared to a parent-child relationship. Prosecutors may want to consider how to strategically tailor grooming related questions to highlight the ways in which the child's relationship with their perpetrator elucidates these behaviors as predatory, inappropriate, and problematic.

In cases where grooming was raised, again, much like forensic interviewers, attorneys focused on exposure to pornography somewhat more often than any other form of grooming. This could be related to the charges in the case serving as a limitation of our design and an avenue for future investigation. Distinct from the forensic interviews however, attorneys also asked many questions related to boundary pushing and gift giving. Because exposure to pornography is the only form of grooming that has been



criminalized in the U.S. to date (Kaylor et al., 2021) it is again important for attorneys to give this form of grooming attention in court.

Less commonly raised grooming behaviors were gift giving, teaching abnormal sex ideals, and giving the child illicit substances. These forms of grooming may garner less attention from attorneys because they are either less common or may be more difficult for attorneys to directly connect to the abuse. Since grooming is a continuous process that blurs the distinction between normal caregiving behaviors and more overt abuse, attorneys may struggle to clearly communicate the connection between a seemingly innocent behavior like isolation (e.g.: taking the child on vacation) and overt sexual abuse.

Alternatively, attorneys may be uninterested in grooming and may be more interested in addressing behaviors that meet charging guidelines given their need to be expedient. While researchers suggest a need to criminalize many grooming behaviors due to their long-term impact of child wellbeing (Whittle et al., 2013), many of these behaviors are precursors to a criminal offense, but still not considered a form of abuse in many jurisdictions (Kaylor et al., 2022). While attorneys do, and perhaps should, devote most of their time to behaviors that meet charging guidelines, grooming serves as an important avenue for understanding a child's behavior and the coherence of a child's abuse narrative. Attorneys would benefit from explaining these dynamics in an effort to create a clear picture of the abuse.

An important limitation of this project is that the data used in this study came from a single large jurisdiction in the US. As such the generalizability of these findings may be limited and questioning practices related to grooming may present differently in

different jurisdictions. Still, this data is unique and valuable as the second of its kind in the country (Stolzenberg et al., 2020).

My research suggests that attorneys raise grooming in many of these cases but give grooming proportionally little attention during the prosecution process for children who have made an allegation of CSA. Attorney should be educated about the grooming process and consider the ways in which a child's age and development, coupled with the child-perpetrator dynamic, may influence the way a child had been groomed. Attorney can then alter their questioning practices in response in ways that are developmentally sensitive and reflect probable grooming-related trends. I suggest attorney education as a key avenue to aid attorneys in building a robust case that acknowledges all available evidence, including key evidence on the grooming process. Still, since attorneys have limited time and capacity to address every aspect of victimization during prosecution, it may be important for other legal actors to aid attorneys in creating a clear and coherent abuse narrative. In this way, it may be important for experts to aid in elucidating the connection between grooming and a child's behaviors, actions, and reactions.

### **Study 3: Grooming in CSA Expert Testimony**

Attorneys gave proportionately limited attention to reports of grooming from children. However, it was still possible that these issues were being addressed in court through expert testimony in these cases. While experimental work has established the importance of expert testimony in contributing to juror understanding and resulting verdicts (Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2010), little qualitative work has explored the content of expert testimony in abuse cases and the source of experts' knowledge. As such, little was known about what experts actually address in these cases and how they

establish the source of their knowledge. As grooming is particularly important for understanding how children behave pre- and post-abuse, the current study explored whether and how grooming was addressed by experts. This was the first study of its kind to contribute to our understanding of what experts address in CSA cases and whether grooming issues were being mentioned at all. Without such explicit instruction, it may be difficult for jurors to attribute child reactions to abuse to grooming.

### ***Hypotheses***

**H1.** Experts will address grooming during testimony in more than 50% of cases as I expect experts to consistently discuss the process of victimization.

**H2.** Experts will rely on experience more often than empirical research to explain grooming when these issues are raised because grooming has not been well defined or explored in published literature.

### ***Method***

In collaboration with the Maricopa Attorney's Office, I received minute entries of 224 cases of CSA. Minute entries were sent to me if they involved a case with at least a single charge of Child Sexual Conduct with a Minor (A.R.S.13-1405), Child Molestation (A.R.S. 13-1410), or Sex Abuse (A.R.S. 13-1404) and occurred between January 2005 and August 2015 in Maricopa County, Arizona. From those minute entries, I identified every witness who testified in the case. I conducted a google search to identify which witnesses could be defined as experts. Expert was defined as a blind behavioral expert (in these cases, an expert who knew no case details but was providing testimony on the general characteristics of CSA), someone who had conducted a forensic interview with

the child in the case, someone providing forensic science testimony, or someone providing medical testimony in the case.

Through these minute entires, I identified 85 cases that contained the testimony of at least one expert. Of these 85 cases, 69 contained at least one behavioral expert, 30 contained at least one medical expert, and 14 contained both a medical and behavioral expert. I then contacted the court reporter in these 85 cases to request a transcription of the expert's testimony. Across the 85 cases that contained the testimony of an expert, only 54 of these cases were transcribed by a court reporter whose email was publicly available. The remaining court reporters were unreachable (likely because many do not work for MCAO now as some of these cases took place over 10 years ago). I had a 41% response rate<sup>2</sup> and received the complete testimony of 31 experts across 22 cases. Seventy-four percent of these cases resulted in a guilty verdict.

### ***Measures***

Two trained, independent coders coded the series of testimonies to explore whether grooming was raised, coding for the same grooming behaviors as mentioned in Study 1 and 2 (see Appendix G) and the basis of evidence related to grooming (science-based vs. experience-based). This coding guide was developed after reading through 50% of the expert testimonies provided.

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<sup>2</sup> A subsample of these respondents ( $n < 5$ ) asked to be compensated several hundred dollars per transcript. We did not collect testimony from these respondents as we could not pay more than \$250 per transcript. Many reports provided us with transcripts free of charge and most others charged between \$0.10-\$0.20 per page.

## ***Analysis Plan***

This data was primarily descriptive in nature. To test Hypothesis 1, I assessed how often grooming issues were raised by experts across cases and provided detailed qualitative examples when these issues were raised. To test Hypothesis 2, I compared the rates at which experts use experience vs. empirical research when raising grooming issues. I used a similar mixed-methods approach to provide both qualitative examples and descriptive data.

## **Results**

Two independent coders coded 20% of the sample ( $N = 6$ ). All variables were reliable above .81 as measured by Cohen's Kappa. Of the cases we received, 31 cases (e.g.: contained the testimony of someone who could be considered an expert in their field doctor, psychologist, forensic interviewer, forensic scientist, etc.). However, only 21 of those who could be described as experts gave expert testimony in these cases (21 experts, across 17 cases). That is, the remainder of these cases involved the testimony of an expert as a general witness in the case (for example a video forensic examiner who is describing a piece of evidence in the case but not providing an expert opinion). We coded the 21 testimonies of experts who provided an expert opinion relevant to the case. This resulted in 3,538 question-answer pairs (Range = 27 - 352;  $M_{\text{per case}} = 141.95$ ,  $SD_{\text{per case}} = 88.75$ ). Across the 17<sup>3</sup> cases in which an expert gave testimony, there were 7 distinct experts who testified in between 1-10 cases (see Table 7 for descriptive statistics).

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<sup>3</sup> Note 4 cases contained testimony of 2 separate experts.

## **H1. Experts References to Grooming**

Across this sample, 11 cases (64.7%) involved at least one question-answer pair related to grooming. Within these cases, 98 question-answer pairs addressed either a grooming behavior to facilitate compliance (N = 69, 70.4%) or a tactic to maintain the secrecy of the abuse (N = 34, 34.7%; see Table 8 for descriptive statistics). The vast majority of cases that referenced grooming in any capacity were case that involved the testimony of the same blind behavioral expert who was called to testify in ten of the eleven cases that referenced grooming.

## **H2. Source of Grooming Knowledge**

To test Hypothesis 2, I was interested in exploring the source of expert opinion related to grooming given in these cases. Across the 98 questions that addressed grooming, one question (1.0%) involved a description of the source of the information (in this case empirical evidence). Since experts very rarely (1.0% of cases) indicated the source of their knowledge, I could not conduct analyses to explore this further.

## **Qualitative Data and Examples**

Of questions addressing grooming, the majority were general questions about grooming tactics (N = 38, 38.8% of all grooming questions; see Table 9 for descriptive statistics and examples). General questions about grooming tactics mentioned grooming as a part of the victimization process without describing any specific behavioral aspects or identifiers of grooming. For example, a prosecuting attorney asked a behavioral expert, “Q. *Could you describe for the jury sort of the process of victimization that can happen in child sexual abuse cases?* A. *Yes. The process of victimization refers to the events that led up to sexual abuse and its aftermath. And we think of it as happening in five steps:*

*Victim selection, engagement, grooming, assault, and concealment.*” Experts who testified in these cases generally differentiated engagement tactics, grooming tactics, and concealment tactics as distinct steps in the process of victimization. Engagement tactics were defined as those used to build a positive relationship with the child and often involved either gift giving, favoritism, or emotional manipulation. For example:

*“Engagement refers to many children report that they have a relationship with their perpetrators before the abuse begins. And many times this relationship is inherent because the person who is abusing them is a relative. But other children report that when they're abused by somebody outside the home that the perpetrator may offer assistance to their family, or financial, or babysitting assistance. They might give the child gifts or take them on special outings or tell the -- compliment the child on how smart they are, how nice they are, or tell the child that they love them and care about them. Other children report that perpetrators develop a relationship of power and control over them; for example, by taking over discipline of the child in the home or perhaps become physically, or emotionally, or verbally abusive to other members of their family, so it establishes a relationship of control over the child.”*

Conversely, experts described grooming tactics as behaviors that allowed the perpetrator to engage in physical contact with the child before abusing them, such as in the following example:

*“Grooming refers to how perpetrators acquaint children with increasingly intrusive touching or sexuality. Many children report that their perpetrators engaged in physical conduct with them that they enjoyed; things like wrestling*

*games, tickling games, lap sitting, perhaps exchanging back rubs and tucking them into bed at night, cuddling and those kinds of things. And for the child this can make them feel very special and cared for and wanted. And for the perpetrator it may be very sexually arousing to engage in behaviors like this. You have other children who report that perpetrators will physically intrude on their space while they're bathing or changing clothes; so the perpetrator will see them either nude or partially clothed. And for children who experience this, they might feel very intimidated. And you have other children who report that perpetrators introduce them to sexuality by playing sexual jokes or talking to them about the birds and the bees or exposing them to pornography or nudity. For children this can make them feel very grown up or it could be very intimidating.”*

Concealment was described as the last step in the process of victimization where the perpetrator attempts to prevent disclosure. For example:

*“Concealment actually refers to how children report that many perpetrators will say or do things to encourage them not to tell, for example, by telling children this is our secret. If you tell somebody, they'll be angry with you or won't believe you or if you tell, I won't be able to see you for a long time or I will go to jail or you will go to a foster home or if you tell how hurt you are, I will kill your family or hurt your pets. These are all strategies that children report that may make them feel like they can't tell anybody. Other children report that the perpetrator never said or did anything overtly, but they felt a sense of loyalty to the perpetrator and, for example, that's why they didn't tell someone right away.”*



In many ways these categorizations made by experts map onto my own conceptualizations of the grooming process by identifying grooming tactics and concealment tactics as distinct. However, my coding captured engagement under the umbrella term of grooming. Few questions drew attention to any one behavioral indicator of grooming or secrecy maintenance. Instead, questions tended to be broad and ask for *any* indicators of grooming to increase compliance or tools to maintain secrecy. The majority of expert's responses described many aspects of grooming without focusing on one specific technique.

### **Exposure to pornography**

Across six cases (28.6%) there was at least one question-answer pair addressing exposure to pornography (N = 6, 6.1%). Descriptions of exposure to pornography generally followed a direct question about definitions of grooming such as:

*Q. And what is grooming? A. Grooming refers to how children often report that perpetrators will introduce them to physical contact and sexuality... it's a way of hooking them into feeling as though they have done something wrong, especially if it involves viewing pornography or perhaps being given alcohol or drugs or cigarettes, that can encourage the child to feel as though they'll get in trouble if anybody finds out about what's going on.*

Question- answer pairs that addressed this form of grooming often described exposure to pornography as a tool to make the child feel like a coconspirator in the abuse.

## **Boundary Pushing**

Testimony addressing boundary pushing (N = 19, 19.4%) appeared in nine (42.9%) cases. These conversations included references to abuse-as-a-game boundary violation as well as overt boundary violations, often in a single response. For example:

*Q. What is that? A. Grooming refers to how children often report that perpetrators will engage in behaviors that they enjoy like wrestling games, tickling games, lap sitting, snuggling, exchanging back rubs or foot rubs, tucking them into bed at night...Now, for some children they report that these types of behaviors can become too intrusive. For example, tickling to the point of pain and not stopping when the child protests. Or maybe intruding in the child's bedroom or bathroom while they're bathing or changing clothes. And that can contribute to the child feeling like they have no control over their personal space.*

These question-answer pairs often addressed the impact of boundary violations on a child's sense of privacy and safety.

## **Teaching Abnormal Sex Ideals**

Question-answer pairs addressing teaching the child abnormal sex ideals (N = 7, 7.1%) occurred in 7 cases. These conversations always followed a direct question about a definition of grooming. For example: "*Q. And what is grooming? A. Grooming refers to how perpetrators acquaint children with increasingly intrusive touching or sexuality...children report that perpetrators introduce them to sexuality by playing sexual jokes or talking to them about the birds and the bees...For children this can make them feel very grown up or it could be very intimidating.*" Here, experts consistently defined

teaching abnormal sex ideals as a form of grooming and often noted the impact these behaviors may have had on the child.

### **Other forms of Grooming**

Other forms of grooming (N = 9, 9.2%) were addressed in eight cases (38.1%). Much like the forensic interviews and trial transcripts, these question-answer pairs generally described a perpetrator's attempts at emotional manipulation, such as:

*Q. And what does the research and professional literature tell us about the relationship? A. Generally that the relationship is established through a combination of seduction and power. For example, children report that the perpetrator complimented them on how they looked, how smart they were, how nice they were, promised the child to protect them or told the child they loved them, perhaps gave them money or took them on a special outing.*

Often, these descriptions of emotional manipulation were referred to as tools used in the engagement process.

### **Gift Giving**

Across nine cases (42.9%) there was at least one question-answer pair that addressed giving gifts (N = 13, 13.3%). For example, "*Q. What impact does that have on the victim? A. For children, especially if the perpetrator is somebody who gives gifts and compliments and financial help and things like that, that can often make the children feel quite special and cared for, and they might develop warm feelings for the perpetrator.*"

Much like emotional manipulation, gift giving was often referenced as a tool used in the engagement process.

## **Isolation**

No question-answer pairs addressed isolating the child.

## **Illicit Substances**

Across three cases (14.3%) a single question-answer pair addressed the perpetrator providing the child with illicit substances (N = 3, 3.1%). These question-answer pairs depicted giving the child illicit substances or using illicit substances with the child as a component of the grooming process. For instance:

*Q. Please talk about the grooming stage. A. Grooming refers to how children often report that perpetrators will engage in physical contact with them before the sexual abuse begins...perhaps introducing the child to nudity or to pornography, or perhaps introducing drugs or alcohol into the child. And, again, these types of activities can make the child feel intimidated and fearful or feeling like they have no control over their personal space or boundaries.*

Conversations surrounding illicit substances often described the implications of these behaviors on the child. Many times, these tactics were described as making the child feel either “grown up” or “intimidated.”

## **Favoritism**

Across seven cases (33.3%) at least one question-answer pair referenced favoritism (N = 11, 11.2%). These conversations usually mentioned tactics to make the child feel special. For example:

*Q. What does that mean? A. Engagement refers to how children often report that they have a relationship with the abuser before the abuse begins. Now, if it's not somebody who is in their family or within their immediate social circle like*

*friends and neighbors and teachers, for children who are abused by somebody outside the immediate family, it's not unusual for children to report that perpetrators will do or say things to gain the trust of their parents and to gain the trust or the affection or intimidate the child. So, for example, children report that perpetrators will give them gifts, offer them money, compliment them on how intelligent they are, how attractive they are, how smart they are. Or how they wish they had a son or daughter just like them. They might tell the child that they care about them or love them and want to protect them. Now, gifts and money and other privileges can contribute to children feeling very special and cared for and bring forth warm feelings for the perpetrator.*

Favoritism was identified by experts as a step in both the engagement process and the grooming process. Similar to the trial transcripts, descriptors of favoritism often mentioned gift giving simultaneously.

### **Requests not to Tell**

Across eight cases (38.1%) at least one question-answer pair addressed requests not to tell (N = 9, 9.2%). These tactics were referred to as concealment tactics by experts, though I have captured these as grooming tactics in coding. For example:

*Q. And please talk about the final stage of concealment. A. Concealment refers to things that children report the perpetrator says or does that encourages them not to tell. For example, sexually abusing the child while they're asleep in bed at night is a way of concealing so the child doesn't recognize what is going on. Other children report that perpetrators will say things to encourage them not to tell; sometimes it's manipulative statements designed to make the child feel*

*responsible for what happened, like, this is our secret, if you tell, we'll both in trouble, or, you know you asked for this, or, I'll stop as soon as you tell me no, when it doesn't stop.*

Conversations about requests not to tell were often imbedded within larger statements addressing threats not to tell. These conversations usually mentioned “secret keeping” between the child and defendant similar to the forensic interviews and trial transcripts.

### **Other Conversations About Nondisclosure**

Across four cases (19%) an expert referenced another tactic to prevent disclosure (N = 5, 5.1%) that did not involve a threat or a request not to tell. These question-answer pairs often addressed bribery as a way to prevent disclosure. This is similar in many ways to gift giving used as a tool to increase compliance. Instead, here experts reference gift giving as a tool to prevent disclosure. For example:

*Q. So other than saying things like don't tell, what are some other things that someone can do to send that same message to the child that would cause them not to disclose right away? A. Well, sometimes perpetrators may not have to say anything overtly. They might use bribes or gifts in order to ensure the child's silence. Others might threaten to take the gifts or bribes away if the child tells.*

Here is a clear example of how grooming tactics, in this case gift giving, can be used to increase compliance before the abuse has begun and then used again, later on, to prevent disclosure.

### **Threats not to Tell**

Ten cases contained at least one question-answer pair referencing threats not to tell (N = 17, 17.3%). Again, this was described as a concealment tactic. For example:

*Q. How does -- what does that mean? Explain that to us, please. A. Concealment refers to how many children report that perpetrators will say or do things to encourage them not to tell... children are told things like this is our secret. If somebody found out we would both be in trouble. Other children are threatened with more social threats, like if you tell no one will believe you, or if you tell you will have to go to a foster home and I will go to jail. The family will break apart. Other children are threatened more overtly with harm to their family, or their pets or to the child themselves.*

Similar to the forensic interviews and trial transcripts, expert's references to threats not to tell mentioned both overt violent threats as well as social threats.

### **Study 3 Discussion**

Collectively, about half of the experts in my sample referenced grooming during their testimony in a CSA case. This suggests that experts are both utilizing a grooming framework and neglecting a grooming framework to explain child behavior, at comparable rates. Data collected in Study 2 suggests that attorneys give grooming proportionately little attention during the prosecution process. These findings, coupled with evidence which suggests jurors have a limited understanding of grooming and its impacts (Winters & Jeglic, 2017), suggests that experts may want to educate jurors on the grooming process such that they may apply their understanding of grooming to the case.

Interestingly, experts rarely referenced the source of their knowledge when describing grooming. Without explicit instruction as to the source of an expert's knowledge jurors are somewhat incapable of evaluating the evidence presented. For example, jurors give different weight to an expert's testimony based on whether their

opinion is rooted in science or clinical experience (Denne et al., 2021). Without instruction as to the source of their knowledge, jurors may indiscriminately give equal weight to all pieces of expert testimony presented. Expert testimony should be given due weight in these cases in so much as experts present valid, reliable, and accurate information.

Jurors' perceptions of the credibility of expert testimony are shaped by many factors including both superficial (i.e. likability) and substantive (i.e. knowledge) assessments (Brodsky et al., 2010). To form accurate opinions as to an expert's knowledge, information regarding the source of that knowledge is important for jurors. As jurors' opinions of an expert are shaped by their qualifications and experience, the source of their knowledge provides valuable information about the credibility of their testimony (Wilcox & NicDaeid, 2018). For jurors to evaluate the weight given to any one piece of information, the source of that information is valuable data which evidence suggests jurors use (Krauss & Sales, 2001). In this way, experts may benefit from explicitly describing the source of their knowledge in an effort to shape perceptions of their own credibility and their impact on the case.

Notably, there was a disconnect between what experts in these cases, and what attorneys in these cases, addressed related to grooming. That is, while attorneys frequently drew attention to exposure to pornography and favoritism, experts devoted time to every form of grooming in many cases without delving into great detail on any one specific behavioral indicator of grooming. As the majority of experts in these cases were blind behavioral experts, they have no prior knowledge about the case or the details



of the allegation. It may be purposeful and strategic for experts to give attention to every aspect of grooming.

Indeed, guides for experts in these cases suggest experts be prepared to address behavioral indicators of grooming (specifically why a child may delay disclosure; Stern, 1997). Evidence suggests that jurors are influenced by the testimony of experts in child sexual abuse cases, specifically (Bull Kovera et al., 1994). Experts should be purposeful and strategic in what they address. As blind behavioral experts know no case details, covering every behavioral indicator of grooming may be a good strategy. Still, where grooming behaviors were described with limited detail and proportional attention, jurors may struggle to connect grooming education to their specific case. While experts addressed many indicators of grooming, isolation was not mentioned by any expert in any of the cases in my sample. Evidence suggests that defendants both emotionally and physically isolate children from family and peers as an important aspect of the grooming process (Flemming et al., 1997). Experts should consider incorporating education on isolation into their testimony to scaffold juror understanding in cases which may have involved isolation.

A potential problem is that the vast majority of testimony related to grooming (91%) came from a single blind behavioral expert within this single jurisdiction. As a result, my findings may overestimate the presence of grooming-related testimony. Less than 10% of experts referenced grooming at all. It is possible then that these findings are not generalizable to other experts within this jurisdiction, or other experts in other jurisdictions. Even within my sample, the content of expert testimony varied greatly suggesting a lack of consistency in what expert's address in these cases. Further, we were

only able to obtain the testimony of 31 experts through public records requests out of a sample of around 80. As no prior research has examined the content of testimony in CSA cases, we cannot compare our results to what may be typical or common in other jurisdiction. Still, as experts are encouraged to prepare for questions related to the grooming process very broadly (Stern, 1997), it is possible these issues arise with some regularity beyond what was documented in our limited sample. While the generalizability of my results are limited, a lack of comparable data speaks to the importance of this line of work as the first of its kind to examine the content of expert testimony in CSA cases.

Collectively, my research suggests that experts are both neglecting and using a grooming framework to explain a child's behavior. When experts do reference grooming, they address many behavioral indications of grooming without devoting a great deal of attention to any one form. Importantly, experts rarely referenced the source of their knowledge – valuable information for jurors to assign weight to their testimony. Further, there was a disconnect between what experts and attorneys address in these cases. This disconnect may leave jurors unable to integrate the knowledge they gained through expert testimony to the specific facts presented in the case. It will be important to examine how jurors understand both attorney questioning and expert testimony related to grooming so as to shape what aspects of grooming these legal actors highlight.

#### **Study 4: Juror Understanding of Grooming in CSA Cases**

As I expected, forensic interviewers, attorneys, and experts alike often neglected to address the importance of grooming in the victimization process. As such, when a case reaches court, jurors may struggle to understand the dynamics of CSA without a firm understanding of grooming, which may not have been referenced at all in the case. Study

4 served to experimentally explore how expert testimony and attorney questioning inform juror understanding of complex issues in CSA cases. I was interested in assessing how jurors interpret children's reports of grooming, and how this influences their assessments of children's credibility. I expected that education on grooming through attorney questioning and expert testimony would lead to a better understanding of the victimization process, higher perceptions of victim credibility, and higher conviction rates. The results of this study guide the prosecution of CSA cases and allow for empirically-based recommendations on how to effectively address grooming in court.

### ***Hypotheses***

**H1.** Participants who read a case scenario where both children and expert testimony reference grooming will have a greater understanding of the victimization process (measured through a mean score on Quas and colleges (2005) Disclosure of Abuse Category Questionnaire and a mean score on the Grooming Knowledge Scale, respectively) than those who read a case scenario and expert testimony that do not address grooming issues.

**H2.** Participants who read a case scenario where both children and expert testimony reference grooming will have higher perceptions of victim credibility (as measured through the Credibility Scale) than those who read a case scenario and expert testimony that does not address grooming issues.

**H3.** Participants who read a case scenario where both children and expert testimony reference grooming will render higher conviction rates when compared to those who read a case scenario and expert testimony that does not address grooming issues.

## ***Method***

I recruited participants to provide verdicts in a mock case of CSA. Jury eligible participants (18 years of age or older, with no felony convictions, in the US) were recruited through Mechanical Turk. Participants read 2 transcripts modified from a true case of CSA depicting a child who was making allegations of abuse by a family member. Participants were randomly assigned to a 2 (child testimony type: grooming process described during testimony or not described) x 2 (expert testimony type: grooming process described or not described) between subject's factorial design (see figure 1).

**Participants and Power.** Participants were compensated with \$1.81 for an estimated 10-15 minutes of work (calculated based on the US minimum wage). Power analyses with a small effect size of .15 for a between subjects ANOVA (fixed effects, main effects, and interactions), powered to .80, with an alpha of .016 to account for multiple comparisons, estimated a total of 700 participants. Estimates of effect size were calculated based on the average effect size of similar work examining CSA case scenarios impact on perceptions of child credibility (see Rogers et al., 2009). I used the smallest effect size published in this paper as a measure of anticipated effect size in the present study. Based on these power analyses, I recruited a sample of 775 jury-eligible participants through Mechanical Turk to account for those who failed attention checks.

**Design.** The perpetrator was a father, age 40, and the victim was his daughter, age 8. The case depicted a child making an allegation of repeated abuse involving delayed disclosure, little physical harm, and a close positive relationship with the perpetrator prior to abuse (see Appendix H). These case characteristics were chosen because they are reflective of the nature of CSA for many children.

**Child's Testimony.** Participants were then randomly assigned to read the testimony of a child that references grooming or the testimony of a child in which grooming is not described. The child's testimony included 40 question-answer pairs for the direct examination and 40 question-answer pairs for the cross-examination. This was developed using real trial transcripts of children of a similar age making allegations of CSA. The question content established rapport and address the child's allegation. In the condition that referenced grooming, participants read 4 question-answer pairs total addressing how the child was groomed into abuse. In the not described condition, participants read a series of 4 question-answer pairs establishing the timeline of abuse.

**Expert's Testimony.** Following the child's testimony, participants were randomly assigned to read to testimony of an expert that references grooming or the testimony of an expert in which grooming is not described. The testimony depicted blind behavioral expert testimony (i.e. testimony in which the expert knows no case details) developed based on real behavioral testimony given in a similar case. The expert's testimony included 20 question-answer pairs establishing the expert's credentials and describing emotional reactions to abuse, the disclosure process, and false accusations of abuse. After reading through 50% of the expert testimony collected in Study 3, these were themes that emerged consistently. Participants in the grooming condition read 4 question-answer pairs addressing how children are groomed and into abuse and tactics to maintain the child's secrecy. Participants in the not-described condition read 4 question-answer pairs addressing coping mechanisms for CSA.

## ***Measures***

Following the trial transcripts and expert testimony presented, participants used a combination of Likert scales, dichotomous measures, and percentage ranges to complete an evaluation of the guilt of the defendant, confidence in their verdict, and credibility of the child (10 questions assessing the cognitive component and honesty component of credibility; adapted from Ross et al., 2007). Participants further completed the Disclosure of Abuse Category questions from Quas and colleagues Belief Questionnaire (2005; see Appendix H) addressing jurors' knowledge of numerous aspects of the disclosure process. I included additional questions addressing grooming generally (Grooming Knowledge Scale, 4 questions). Participants completed 3 attention checks (e.g.: pick number 2 if you are paying attention) scattered throughout the survey. Finally, participants answered a series of demographic questions (age, gender, race/ethnicity, political stance, education) and two questions assessing their experience with children (*Do you have experience with children?; Do you have children?*).

## ***Analysis Plan***

To test Hypothesis 1, I created an average score across questions addressing juror understanding of CSA dynamics (Disclosure of Abuse Category and Grooming Knowledge Scale, respectively). I used an ANOVA (IV: Condition, DV: sum score on each scale, respectively) to explore the influence of attorney questioning and expert testimony on juror general understanding of CSA dynamics. To test Hypothesis 2, I used an ANOVA (IV: Condition, DV: perceptions of child credibility) to examine the influence of attorney questioning and expert testimony on perceptions of child credibility. Finally, to test Hypothesis 3 I conducted a binary logistic regression (IV: Condition, DV:

guilty verdicts) to explore the influence of attorney questioning and expert testimony on guilty verdicts. Binary logistic regression has been deemed an appropriate method of data analysis when working with dichotomous guilty verdicts often used in jury decision making research (see Wright et al., 2011).

## Results

I collected a total of 784 responses from jury eligible participants. Those who completed less than 50% of the survey ( $N = 23$ ) and those whose reCAPTCHA score was less than .5 ( $N = 15$ ; see Qualtrics recommendations for reCAPTCHA results) were removed from analyses. I further removed 14 participants who failed 2/3 of the attention checks<sup>4</sup>. The final sample consisted of 731 participants. Participants were, on average, neither conservative nor liberal (Range 1-7;  $M = 4.25$ ,  $SD = 2.16$ ) and were primarily White (73.3%; African American 14.8%, Native American 4%, Hispanic/Latino, 3.7%, Asian/Asian American 3.1%, or Other 0.5%). Most participants were between 25 - 34 years old (46.9%; 35 - 44 years 32.1%, 45 - 54 years 10.1%, 18 - 24 years 5.9%, 55 - 64 years 4.0%, or 65+ years 0.8%). Participants were primarily Male (63.5%; Female 35.3%, Non-binary 0.1%, prefer not to say 0.3%) and the majority had a 4-year-degree or higher level of education (88.6%). Most participants had some experience with children (43.4%; a lot of experience 41.1%, no experience 11.1%) and most had children of their own (77.5%, no children 18.1%, no response 4.3%).

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<sup>4</sup> All analyses were conducted excluding any participant who failed any attention check, as well. However, by excluding these additional participants, the study was underpowered. All hypothesized analyses remained non-significant.

### **Case Scenario and Understanding of the Victimization Process**

To explore the relationship between case scenario (4 conditions; 2 x Child Testimony: GD or GND, 2 x Expert Testimony: GD or GND) and understanding of the victimization process (Disclosure of Abuse Category Scale and Grooming Knowledge Scale), I conducted a series of ANOVAs. Perceptions of the victimization processes were measured through both the Disclosure of Abuse Category Questionnaire Scale (question 6 reverse scored) and Grooming Knowledge Scale, respectively (see Table 10 for descriptive statistics). There was no effect of condition on participants understanding of the victimization processed measured through either the Disclosure of Abuse Category Scale,  $F(3, 731) = 0.029, p = .993, \eta^2 = .000$ , or the Grooming Knowledge Scale  $F(3, 625) = 1.244, p = .293, \eta^2 = .006$  (See Table 11 for means by condition).

### **Case Scenario and Perceptions of Child Credibility**

Before examining the impact of condition on perceptions of child credibility, I conducted a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) on the 10-quesiton credibility questionnaire (questions 8 and 10 were reverse scored; see Ross et al., 2007 for rationale behind a PCA when assessing child credibility). The correlation matrix for these variables revealed that all variables had at least one correlation with another variable in the matrix that was greater than .3. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measured at 0.88 with a significant Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ( $p < .001$ ) suggesting that the data can be factorized. PCA revealed two distinct components that explained 40.1% and 14.4% of the variance, respectively. These two components were retained and explained a total 54.5% of the total variance (see Table 11 for component loading matrix). Classic conceptualizations of credibility use a similar two factor model with two distinct



components of honesty and cognitive ability (Ross et al., 2007). My model did not conform to classic conceptualizations of credibility but instead factorized into 2 different distinct measures of overall credibility (Component 1) and falsification of a report (Component 2). All analyses were conducted examining these distinct components of credibility separately. Because missing data (where participants answered prefer not to say) was missing not at random (MNAR), missing data was excluded pairwise.

To explore the relationship between case scenario (4 conditions; 2 x Child testimony: GD or GND, 2 x Expert Testimony: GD or GND) and perceptions of child credibility (Component 1 and 2, respectively) I conducted a series of ANOVAs. There was no significant impact of condition on perceptions of Component 1 credibility,  $F(3, 514) = 2.19, p = .09, \eta^2 = .013$  nor Component 2 credibility  $F(3, 619) = 0.63, p = .58, \eta^2 = .003$  (see Table 11 for means by condition).

### **Case Scenario and Guilty Verdict**

Collapsed across conditions, 82% of participants chose a guilty verdict. To examine the impact of condition on verdict, I conducted a binary logistic regression. The model was not significant,  $\chi^2(1) = 2.07, p = .150$  (Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .005$ ). I conducted an exploratory follow-up binary logistic regression to control for variability introduced through relevant participant demographics (age, gender, race, education, have children, have experience with children). This model was also not significant;  $\chi^2(1) = 1.74, p = .16$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2 = .005$ .

### **Study 4 Discussion**

Garnering an understanding of how jurors apply and interpret testimony related to grooming is important. Across a sample of over 700 participants I explored,

experimentally, the impact of attorney questioning, and expert testimony combined related to grooming, on the perceptions of the child and defendant in the case. Educating jurors on the victimization process through either attorney questioning related to grooming, expert testimony related to grooming, or a combination of both did not lead to a greater understanding of the victimization process. Instead, mock jurors (collapsed across conditions) had a fairly accurate understanding of grooming and the grooming process.

No single question caused a consistent deficit, instead deficits were variable across questions. While prior research suggests jurors tend to have great difficulty identifying grooming (Winters & Jelic, 2017), my research suggests that jurors hold many accurate beliefs about grooming and the disclosure process generally. This may be due to heightened attention given to online grooming in the media, particular in recent years (Martellozo, 2013). Researcher suggests that high consumption of media is related to higher perceptions of the prevalence of online grooming, but media exposure has less of an effect on perceptions of the prevalence of intrafamilial grooming (Williams & Hudson, 2013). This suggests that jurors, even those who have some level of understanding of grooming, may not apply this knowledge appropriately to their understanding of intrafamilial CSA cases, as was presented in this case, and display generally low level so concern surrounding this form of CSA (Williams & Hudson, 2013).

Still, I would expect education on grooming to lead to a better understanding of both grooming and the victimization process broadly, even when prior knowledge was relatively high. It is possible that my manipulation was not strong enough, or participants

were not reading case scenarios carefully with attention to detail. My manipulation involved 4 question answer pairs that addressed grooming across both attorney questioning and expert testimony. This would require participants to carefully read the entire case scenario, giving weight to these lines of testimony. While some evidence suggests that when paid appropriately workers on MTurk can provide high quality data (Litmen et al., 2014), it is possible participants were not motivated to carefully read the case scenarios or give them the weight they would in a true trial. More recent evidence suggests that the quality of Mechanical Turk data has fallen in the past 5 years. Some estimates suggest that 25-35% of participants in any single study provide low quality responses (Ahler et al., 2021). It will be important to replicate this study with a strong manipulation (such as twice as many references to grooming) and across a different sample of participants (such as Prolific Academic workers).

Furthermore, education on grooming did not lead to higher perceptions of either component 1 or component 2 credibility. Again, participants, collapsed across conditions, consistently viewed the child as credible. No single question led to lower credibility scores from mock jurors, but means were fairly consistent across questions. These means scores translate into perceptions of the child as “moderately credible.” This would again suggest that my manipulation may not have been strong enough to capture subtle increases in perceptions of child credibility which tend to be high already. To better capture variability in child credibility, it will be important to replicate this study with a less-credible witness through introducing factors that generally detract from credibility. This could include a longer delay in disclosure (Miller et al., 2022) a recantation (Rubin & Thelen, 1996), or unintuitive emotional and behavioral reactions from the child

(Campbell et al., 2015). Changing these case level details and introducing doubt may prevent the ceiling effect I observed in my study.

Alternatively, these results may suggest that jurors are somewhat well informed on the nature of grooming and disclosure, and education may not be necessary (Williams & Hudson, 2013). Still, prior research suggests that jurors understanding of both grooming and disclosure range drastically, and education may be an important tool to teach jurors about the nature of childhood victimization (Denne et al., 2021). This could be an important avenue for future research to establish the bounds of jurors understanding related to grooming and disclosure broadly and how to appropriately educate them on these issues in court.

Finally, education on grooming did not lead to differences in verdicts across these cases. Across conditions, jurors chose a guilty verdict at a rate of 82%. This is a high conviction rate that does not leave a great deal of room for variability in guilty verdicts, again suggesting that my manipulation may have been too weak to capture differences in verdicts. Conviction rates at CSA trials generally range from 50-75% demonstrating that the conviction rates in my study were particularly high (Cross et al., 1995). Overall, my case may have been too strong in favor of the child to garner any suspicion or credibility concerns from jurors.

This data is not without limitations. Importantly, my jury research did not contain deliberations. As research naturally requires a tradeoff between time, resources, and validity I used the resources available to create the most realistic case I could. Researchers suggests that jury studies without deliberation should carefully consider the importance of jury instruction in this tradeoff (Lieberman et al., 2016). I utilized jury

instructions in my study which added validity to my research. Still, deliberation is an important tool to understand how jurors discuss evidence and how jurors change their opinions to reach a final decision (Hastie et al., 2013). As such, my research would be strengthened through deliberation – an important avenue for future research.

Further, my juror study did not contain a complete case, as true CSA cases can contain numerous witnesses and can span weeks at times. Instead, my abridged version highlighted key pieces of evidence and testimony. Again, the tension between validity and feasibility exists here. The case evidence I developed was based on real testimony given in a similar case. Still, an examination of juror understanding of grooming in true prosecuted cases would be interesting and an important avenue for future research.

Importantly my controlled manipulation allowed us to control for variability that exists in the real world (e.g.: variability in child age, gender, case severity, etc....) – factors known to contribute to case outcomes (Melkman et al., 2017). As such, my contribution, though limited, is important.

Furthermore, the participants in my sample were skewed young and, as a result, were perhaps not representative of a true jury. Older jurors may be interested in these cases and likely hold different views than younger jurors. Individual juror characteristics like gender and age play a role in shaping perceptions of both the victim and defendant in CSA cases (Bottoms et al., 2007). In the future, researchers should incorporate the views of older jurors whose opinions in these cases may be different than the younger jurors captured in my sample.

While the manipulation in the presented case may have been too weak to capture differences in perceptions of child credibility and subsequent case verdicts across

conditions, this research presents valuable insight into juror's base level understanding of grooming and the disclosure process. That is, in line with prior research (Quas et al., 2005), jurors hold a combination of true and false beliefs related to grooming, and the disclosure process. Overall, jurors had primarily *accurate* understanding, more accurate than those in Quas and colleagues 2005 study. Again, this suggests that jurors understanding of abuse and grooming may be more accurate than previously thought.

As jurors seem to have a reasonably accurate understanding of some aspects of grooming and disclosure, it may be important to educate them on more subtle behaviors that are connected with abuse. That is, while jurors may understand some aspects of abuse such as delayed disclosure, they may not have a robust understanding of behavioral indicators of abuse (Quas et al., 2005; McGuire & London, 2017). It will be important to continue to explore jurors understanding of the victimization process in CSA cases. Replication and extension of the present study with a stronger manipulation and more representative sample will be an important avenue for future research.

### **General Discussion**

This work has concrete, practical application for how interviewers question children about grooming, the methods courts are currently using to address these issues with children, as well as providing insight into what tactics are *actually* useful in court. Study 1 provided concrete data on whether and how forensic interviewers gather reports of grooming. This was the first step in guiding forensic interviews on how to best elicit these reports. Additional work will be necessary to clarify what question types elicit the most productive reports related to grooming, particularly in cases without strong rapport, where question type may be more formative and important.

In a similar vein, Study 2 addressed how courts raise issues related to grooming. As these issues were not raised frequently, this work presents an avenue to educate attorneys on grooming as an integral part of the victimization process. Furthermore, Study 3 provided information on the content of expert testimony in CSA cases, addressing whether and how experts actually educate jurors in court. It provided the foundation for informing expert testimony in these cases through suggesting topics for which jurors may not understand and experts neglect. This is likely to directly influence case outcomes, as expert testimony has been linked to more favorable case outcomes for children (Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2010).

Similarly, Study 4 revealed practical implications in informing experts and prosecuting attorneys alike on what issues they should raise in court to establish the bounds of victim credibility. While I uncovered primarily nonsignificant results, this work serves to guide and inform future research on how to study the impact of grooming in court. This work may be particularly useful in cases where a child's behavior may not be intuitive; cases where a child has delayed disclosure, recanted an allegation, or has a largely positive relationship with their perpetrator. The dynamics of grooming could potentially help jurors understand these issues, creating a clearer picture of victim credibility. The numerous practical implications of this work for education and intervention in CSA cases speak to its importance.

## **Conclusions**

Understanding grooming is crucial to preventing abuse and developing appropriate intervention when a child has been victimized (Berliner, 2018). While grooming has been integrated into definitions of victimization used by both researchers

and clinicians (Berliner, 2018), few researchers have explored grooming as a critical component of the investigation and prosecution process for children who have made an allegation of CSA. The practical and theoretical implications provided through the current series of studies are a critical step for addressing this form of victimization in court and ensuring victimized children's access to justice.

Collectively, my work suggests that grooming is not given adequate attention during key stages of the investigation and prosecution process for children who have made an allegation of CSA. That is, while legal actors address grooming at least once in over half of their cases, forensic interviewers, attorneys, and experts gave *proportionally* little attention to grooming in their testimonies. Grooming is an important tool for explaining delayed disclosure (Smallbone & Wortley, 2001) lack of protest (Wolf & Pruitt, 2019), a child's positive relationship with their perpetrator (McElvaney, 2019), and other unintuitive behaviors a child engages in both pre and post abuse (Plummer, 2018). I suggest forensic interviewers, attorneys, and experts consider devoting more time to raising grooming to explain the behaviors that preceded the abuse and the those that maintained a child's silence after the abuse. Of course, many grooming behaviors manifest as seemingly normal parenting behaviors and do not always serve as precursors to abuse. These behaviors should not always be flagged as risk factors for sexual victimization (Berliner, 2018). Still in cases where there is a suspicion of abuse, these behaviors can provide a framework for understanding how a child behaved and provide insight into the dynamics of victimization.

I uncovered a consistent disconnect between what forensic interviewers, attorneys, and experts addressed related to grooming. This disconnect is potentially



problematic. For example, isolation was occasionally mentioned by forensic interviewers and attorneys but was not mentioned at all by experts. Consistency across legal actors as to what forms of grooming to address may help jurors connect expert testimony to the case on which they serve. Experts in these cases would do well to address every form of grooming in an effort to educate jurors on the form of grooming that may have occurred in their specific case. Of course, if attorneys have failed to raise grooming in the case, jurors will be unable to apply the education they receive through expert testimony in their cases. Furthermore, attorneys are unlikely to raise grooming if it has not been mentioned at all in a forensic interview. In this way, each stage of the investigation process is deeply connected, and grooming may need to be raised at each stage to create a clear and compelling picture of the abuse that may have occurred.

Forensic interviewers and attorneys should work closely with the child to determine what form of grooming, if any, occurred in the cases as opposed to addressing grooming indiscriminately as blind behavioral experts should do. In this way, both forensic interviewers and attorneys should use a nuanced understanding of the grooming process, and an understanding of the way age and a child's relationship with their perpetrator influence the type of grooming that is likely to have occurred, to tailor their questioning practices related to grooming in response.

Attorneys, experts, and interviewers alike gave significantly less attention to grooming to maintain secrecy than grooming to increase compliance. Attorneys often address myths related to delayed disclosure in child sexual abuse cases (Denne et al, 2022). As such, we would expect attorneys to devote time to addressing the tools perpetrators use to maintain a child's secrecy leading to a delayed disclosure or lack of

disclosure. Instead, it seems significantly more attention is given to how the child was engaged pre-abuse. This may be a product of our sample, and CSA cases that reach court generally.

Cases that involve delayed disclosure are, in some cases, less likely to lead to decisions to prosecute (Cashmore et al., 2017). Cases that involve repeated abuse, naturally involve delayed disclosure. It is likely that our sample is missing many cases with delayed disclosure as these cases are generally less likely to reach court, speaking to problems with case processing (Cross et al., 2003). For this reason, attorneys may be less likely to address grooming to maintain secrecy because only a single instance of abuse has occurred. Still, addressing both secrecy maintenance tactics and engagement tactic may be important for establishing the child as a credible, honest, and reliable witness in cases that did involve a delay in disclosure (Melkman et al., 2017).

The qualitative data from these lines of research provided important and invaluable information on new forms of grooming not previously addressed in the literature. Specifically, I consistently uncovered distinct forms of boundary violations – both overt and abuse-as-a-game boundary violations. Abuse-as-a-game often appeared as conversations about wrestling, tickling, or games that precede the abuse. In contrast, overt boundary violation involved conversation about purposeful invasion of the child’s privacy. While abuse-as-a-game boundary violations were common among younger children, overt boundary violations were common among older children. I identified this distinction between forms of boundary violations across forensic interviewers, attorneys, and experts alike. While consistently identified and differentiated by these legal actors, prior research has used the umbrella term of “boundary violations” for these forms of

abuse (Bennett & O'Donohue, 2014). I suggest disentangling them as abuse perpetrators use these methods differently with children of different ages. This is an important distinction, as it will guide research on how to frame questions related to boundary violations appropriately, considering the age of the child.

Furthermore, I uncovered emotional manipulation as a more novel form of grooming. Emotional manipulation conversations were raised by forensic interviewers, attorneys, and experts across these cases. This form of grooming generally appeared as conversations about the ways in which the perpetrator complimented the child or spoke very highly of them. Again, this behavior alone is not a direct precursor to abuse nor a reason to flag a child as a potential victim. Instead, emotional manipulation, in combination with many other grooming behaviors, could raise concern.

Prior definitions do not consider emotional manipulation as a behavioral indication of grooming (Bennett & O'Donohue, 2014), though it is captured under broad definitions of grooming without specific behavioral indicators (Winters et al., 2021). This further demonstrates a disconnect between research and legal/clinical practice. I suggest new definitions of grooming, that list specific behavioral indicators similar to Bennett and O'Donohue's (2014) definition, but that also incorporate emotional manipulation as an important element of the grooming process. This would allow for novel definitions to capture the entire spectrum of behaviors that can be defined as grooming.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

These studies have several limitations which provide context to my conclusions and recommendations. The data from Studies 1-3 came from a single, large district in Arizona. As such the generalizability of these findings may be limited and questioning

practices related to grooming may present differently in different jurisdictions. Still the data used in this research is only the second of its kind in the US (Stolzenberg et al., 2020). Further, Maricopa County is a large and diverse county in the US, that sees a great deal of sexual abuse cases each year (Arizona Department of Public Safety, 2020). The uniqueness of this data, though it is limited in generalizability, speaks to its importance and value. Despite these limitations, this body of work makes important contributions to the conversation surrounding how grooming is addressed during the investigation and prosecution process in CSA cases.

Furthermore, the definitions of grooming that I utilized for this series of projects captured in-person grooming but did not capture the full spectrum of behaviors that constitute online grooming. These behaviors are somewhat distinct from in-person grooming as they are used by different offenders towards different victims. Unlike in person grooming, those who engage in online grooming are often strangers to the child (Chiu & Quayle, 2022). Online grooming also impacts older children more often than young children who cannot access the internet. In this way, these behaviors manifest differently and may not have been captured in the coding guides I developed. Still, there were few cases across my sample that involved online grooming suggesting these cases may be less common, less frequently reported, or more difficult to prosecute. The latter is likely true as many forms of grooming, particularly online grooming when an offender does not have physical access to a child, are not criminal offenses. In the future, researchers should carefully capture behaviors that constitute grooming both in-person and online.

Future researchers should uncover trends in how attorneys, experts, and interviewers talk about grooming and the impact of these conversations on juror's perceptions of these cases. First, researchers should examine how grooming is addressed during additional stages of the prosecution process; that is, during opening and closing arguments and testimony across other witnesses. It is possible that attorneys are describing how a child was groomed during these statements or even discussing grooming with other witnesses in the case. As perpetrators groom both victims and their environment (i.e. non-offending parent; Cromer et al., 2011), it is possible grooming is being addressed during other stages in the prosecution process. Still as a child's testimony is the main form of evidence in many cases (Finkelhor, 1995), the richest descriptions of grooming likely come directly from a child's own testimony. Second, researchers should continue to deepen and enrich our understanding of the grooming process as a whole. My research was limited to cases where a suspicion of CSA was made or, most often, a child made a direct report. Again, these cases that are investigated are somewhat distinct and unique as they tend to involve more corroborative evidence and shorter disclosure delayed (Cross et al., 2003). Examining reports from children or adults whose cases were not prosecuted could add to a more comprehensive and inclusive definition of grooming. Finally, I recommend a replication of Study 4 with a representative and naive sample (Chandler et al., 2019) to capture the subtle effects education on grooming may have on case verdicts.

Beyond the limitations of my data, I have used unique datasets to create a rich body of both quantitative and qualitative data that provides invaluable insight into the kinds of grooming that are given attention during the investigation and prosecution

process for CSA cases. This research provides the first step in documenting how legal actors talk to children about grooming, in an effort to guide them, through future research, on how to do it best. My findings suggest that forensic interviewers and legal actors are missing an important opportunity to raise grooming in these cases and use grooming as a framework to describe a child's behavior. This work expands upon our understanding of and definition of grooming and lays the foundation for future research on how interviews, experts, and attorneys alike talk to children about the grooming process.

**Table 1.**

*Study 1 forensic interviewers question type and child response productivity with examples.*

Question Type	N	% of all grooming questions	M response productivity	SD	Example
<b>Yes/no</b> Question can be answered with a yes or no	311	41.3%	30.92	211.50	Q: <i>Did he ever wrestle you or tickle you or stuff like that?</i>
<b>Wh-</b> The question asks who, what, where, when, why, or which.	167	22.2%	32.90	37.76	Q: <i>What was nice and fun about him at first?</i>
<b>Tell me more/about</b> The question asks the child to elaborate on information already provided in the interview.	158	21.0%	74.82	113.95	Q: <i>And, tell me everything [perpetrator] said about the touching.</i>
<b>Statement</b> The question would be a proper sentence if one dropped the question mark.	66	8.8%	43.02	100.89	Q: <i>He said not to tell anyone?</i>
<b>How</b> The question asks how.	31	4.1%	30.12	37.76	Q: <i>How did you feel when that happened?</i>
<b>Not a question</b> E.g.: Okay, Good, etc.	11	1.5%	85.14	137.21	Q: <i>Okay.</i>
<b>Forced choice</b> There are multiple options so that the child chooses among the answers	4	0.5%	12.80	7.66	Q: <i>Okay, has she told you about that one time or more than one time?</i>
<b>Do you know/do you remember/ can you</b> Interviewer begins/ends questions by asking whether the child remembers/knows/recalls/thinks/or “can you tell us.”	3	0.4%	174.75	292.48	Q: <i>When you say girls, can you tell me more about that?</i>
<b>Other/unclassified</b> E.g.: Sorry? Excuse me?	2	0.3%	23.00	13.86	Q: <i>Hmm?</i>
<b>Tag</b> The question include a tag, such as “doesn’t/isn’t he” or “does he.”	0	0%			





**Table 2.**

*Study 1 and 2 coding categories, definitions, examples, and percent of cases with at least one instance for forensic interviewers and attorneys*

Grooming Tactic Definition	Forensic Interviews		Trial Transcripts	
	%	Example	%	Example
<b>Tactics to Facilitate Abuse</b>	84.7%		62.7%	
<b>Exposure to Pornography</b> Question or answer that addressed exposure to R-rated movies or movies and magazines depicting pornography.	42.3%	Q: Um one question I always ask at the end whenever someone comes and talks to me [child] is um have you ever seen like movies, magazines, or stuff on the internet that shows people with no clothes on? A:[shakes head].	18.7%	Q. What about an adult? Have you ever seen pictures in a book or a magazine or maybe a movie of a grown-up without any clothes on? A. I remember, yes, I have seen – I actually have seen them on movies.
<b>Boundary pushing</b> Question or answer that addressed excessive tickling, hugging, wrestling, sitting on the perpetrators lap, and other boundary violation such as bathing, sleeping in the same bed as the child, and nudity around the child.	48.0%	Q: Would he ever like wrestle with you or tickle you or anything like that? A: No.	21.6%	Q. Did you and [defendant] ever wrestle with each other? A. No.
<b>Teaching abnormal sex ideals</b> Question or answer that referenced conversations about sex outside of good touch bad touch conversations or age-appropriate conversations about sex education.	6.5%	Q: Okay. So, tell me more about the sexual questions. A: Like he asked me was I a virgin or not and like um like was I interested in like guys. I can't even remember, I can't really remember.	6.7%	Q. So the defendant would tell you about sexual things that he had done? A. Correct.

<p><b>Other forms of grooming</b> Question or answer that addresses other forms of grooming that did not fall into a distinct category captured through the coding guide.</p>	3.8%	<p>Q: Did he ever say nice things about you? A: Yeah.</p>	4.5%	<p>Q. Did he do nice things for you? A. Yes.</p>
<p><b>Giving Gifts</b> Question or answer addressing the perpetrator giving the child a gift or money.</p>	10.9%	<p>Q: Okay. Well, tell me more about your dad. A: He loved me. He still loves me...He used to take me to the stores and buy stuff. Anything I wanted...</p>	21.6%	<p>Q. And when you were at [defendant's house]', did he give you gifts as well? A.Yes.</p>
<p><b>Isolating</b> Question or answer addressing attempts to isolate the child physically or emotionally from others.</p>	3.6%	<p>Q: So he was the one that brought it up. A: Yes. 'Cause I, there's certain things I feel uncomfortable talking about. Like I don't just go up to guys at my school and randomly start talking about sex...And he would just bring it up randomly. It was always when we were alone ... he'd always like take me to Fry's and tell me about stuff in the car and I feel like it was a way to get for him to tell me things alone.</p>	3.7%	<p>Q. So you went to - sometimes you went to the cabin with just you and [defendant]? A. Yes.</p>
<p><b>Illicit substances</b> Question or answer addressing the perpetrator giving the child drugs or alcohol or using drugs or alcohol with the child.</p>	1.4%	<p>Q: What was making your body numb? A: I don't know. I think it was just everything, more was the drug. It would always be different kinda. The drug that he would give us, it was always different..."</p>	3.7%	<p>Q. Now, something else the defendant did with you, was there drugs involved? A. Yes.</p>
<p><b>Favoritism</b> Question or answer addressing how the child was treated differently by the perpetrator</p>	0%	0	7.5%	<p>Q. Okay. Now, as your brothers and sisters got older, did [defendant] treat you any differently than any of his own children? A. Yeah.</p>

<b>Inducement to Secrecy</b>	80.4%		86.6%	
<b>Requests</b> Question or answer related to requests not to tell.	17.0%	Q: No? Okay. Well I was wondering has someone ever told you to keep a secret about something? A. No.	30.6%	Q. And did you not tell because your uncle told you not to tell anyone? A: Yes.
<b>Threats</b> Question or answer related to a direct consequence of disclosure.	7.2%	Q: She said don't tell nobody? Did she say what would happen if you told? A: She said I'm gonna do it again. And then I told somebody.	23.9%	Q. Okay. Did he say what would happen if you told anybody? A: No.
<b>Other questions about nondisclosure</b> Question or answer related to other conversations about nondisclosure not captured in the coding guide.	13.8%	Q: Did he say something else to you about telling? A [shakes head].	3.0%	Q. Did [defendant] ever tell you that -- did he ever say anything to you about talking about this or not talking about it? A: I don't know.

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**Table 3.***Study 1 descriptive statistics on grooming questions by forensic interviewers.*

Grooming Tactic	Number of Questions Total	Proportion of total grooming questions	Range per case	<i>M</i> per case	<i>SD</i> per case
<b>Tactics to facilitate abuse</b>	672	89.2%	0-43	4.91	6.22
Exposure to Pornography	352	46.8%	0-40	2.55	5.14
Boundary pushing	183	24.3%	0-11	1.33	2.15
Teaching abnormal sex ideals	55	7.3%	0-14	0.40	1.97
Other forms of grooming	46	6.1%	0-6	0.33	1.06
Giving Gifts	34	4.5%	0-6	0.35	0.91
Isolating	6	<1%	0-2	0.04	0.24
Illicit substances	7	<1%	0-4	0.05	0.42
Favoritism	0	0%	0	0	0
<b>Inducement to Secrecy</b>	82	10.9%	0-5	1.05	0.84
Requests	37	4.9%	0-3	0.37	0.66
Other questions about nondisclosure	31	4.1%	0-5	0.22	0.68
Threats	17	2.3%	0-4	0.12	0.52

**Table 4.**  
*Study 2 descriptive statistics on grooming questions by attorneys.*

Grooming Tactic	Number of Questions Total	Proportion of total grooming questions	Range per case	<i>M</i> per case	<i>SD</i> per case
<b>Tactics to facilitate abuse</b>	911	84.0%	0-45	2.81	6.40
Exposure to Pornography	297	27.4%	0-18	0.72	2.14
Boundary pushing	209	19.0%	0-13	0.78	2.17
Teaching abnormal sex ideals	113	10.4%	0-10	0.17	0.99
Other forms of grooming	31	2.9%	0-20	0.23	1.76
Giving Gifts	134	12.4%	0-14	0.51	1.77
Isolating	22	2.0%	0-5	0.12	0.68
Illicit substances	76	7.0%	0-20	0.22	1.78
Favoritism	27	2.5%	0-3	0.10	0.41
<b>Inducement to Secrecy</b>	164	15.1%	0-6	0.83	1.13
Requests	54	5.0%	0-6	0.40	0.71
Other questions about nondisclosure	61	5.6%	0-1	0.023	0.17
Threats	84	7.7%	0-6	0.39	0.87

**Table 5.***Study 2 descriptive statistics for proportion of grooming questions by attorney*

Form of Grooming	Proportion of Prosecution Questions			Proportion of Defense Questions		
	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Total Grooming Questions	.00-.28	0.02	0.03	0-.19	0.014	.03
Grooming to facilitate compliance	.00-.27	.05	.058	.00-.19	.037	.042
Grooming to maintain secrecy	.00-.08	.02	.023	.00-.05	.0097	.008

\*Proportions of total questions asked are presented in the table, see Study 2 results section for percentage of grooming questions by attorney.

**Table 6.***Study 2 productivity by question type descriptive statistics*

Question Type	N	%	M response productivity	SD	Example
<b>Yes/no</b> Question can be answered with a yes or no	371	34.3%	4.67	8.41	Q. Did [defendant] do things for you that you liked?
<b>Wh-</b> The question asks who, what, where, when, why, or which.	219	20.2%	18.52	27.29	Q. Did -- when [defendant] did these things to you, what did he tell you about telling other people about these things?
<b>Statement</b> The question would be a proper sentence if one dropped the question mark	199	18.4%	4.28	9.40	Q. [defendant] never gave you a bath?
<b>Do you know/do you remember/can you</b> Interviewer begins/ends questions by asking whether the child remembers/knows/recalls/thinks/or "can you tell us."	99	9.1%	8.09	18.20	Q. Do you remember if he kissed you with an open mouth or a closed mouth or something else?
<b>Tag</b> the question includes a tag, such as "doesn't/isn't he" or "does he."	63	5.8%	2.54	4.49	Q. Okay. And that he would also buy you clothes, right?
<b>How</b> The question asks how	47	4.3%	14.15	12.60	Q. How would [defendant] kiss you on the lips?
<b>Forced choice</b> There are multiple options so that the child chooses among the answers	30	2.8%	9.60	9.49	Q. Would [defendant] be in the bathtub with you, or sometimes was it just you and josh or something else?
<b>Not a question</b> E.g.: Okay, Good, etc.	29	2.7%	14.66	18.73	Q. Yeah.
<b>Tell me more/about</b> questions will ask the child to elaborate on information already provided in the interview	21	1.9%	35.05	23.47	Q. Tell us a little bit about the bike?

<b>Negative Term</b> the question includes a negative term (with a contraction of “not”)	<b>3</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<b>1.0</b>	<i>Q. Isn't that what you did that night by not telling them about the drugs and alcohol?</i>
<b>Other/unclassified</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<i>Q. I'm sorry?</i>

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**Table 7.**  
*Study 3 description of experts in sample of cases*

Expert number	Number of Testimonies in Sample	Category of expertise	Called By
1	1	Forensic Biologist	Prosecution
2	1	Forensic Interviewer	Prosecution
3	4	Medical Doctor	Prosecution
4	10	Behavioral Expert	Prosecution
5	1	Medical Doctor	Defense
6	2	Nurse Practitioner	Prosecution
7	2	Forensic Interviewer	Prosecution

\*Note one expert testified for the defense. This did not impact the results as the expert did not mention grooming in the testimony they provided.

**Table 8.***Study 3 descriptive statistics on grooming tactics mentioned by experts*

Grooming Tactic	N	Percent of all grooming questions	Range per case	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Grooming to facilitate compliance	69	70.4%	0-14	3.29	4.47
Grooming to maintain secrecy	34	34.7%	0-6	1.62	2.09

**Table 9.***Study 3 descriptive statistics and examples of grooming categories addressed by experts*

Grooming tactic	N	Percentage of all grooming questions	Examples
<b>Grooming to increase compliance</b>	69	70.4%	
General	38	38.8%	Q: <i>Without describing the five steps [of victimization], can you name them?</i> A: <i>It would be victim selection, engagement, grooming, assault, and concealment.</i>
Exposure to pornography	6	6.1%	Q: <i>And what is grooming?</i> A: <i>Grooming refers to how children often report that perpetrators will introduce them to physical contact and sexuality... some children report that perpetrators will start having sexual questions with them, telling sexual jokes or perhaps even exposing them to nudity or to pornography.</i>
Boundary pushing	19	19.4%	Q: <i>What is that?</i> A: <i>Grooming refers to how children often report that perpetrators will engage in behaviors that they enjoy like wrestling games, tickling games, lap sitting, snuggling, exchanging back rubs or foot rubs, tucking them into bed at night...Now, for some children they report that these types of behaviors can become too intrusive. For example, tickling to the point of pain and not stopping when the child protests. Or maybe intruding in the child's bedroom or bathroom while they're bathing or changing clothes. And that can contribute to the child feeling like they have no control over their personal space.</i>
Teaching Abnormal Sex Ideals	7	7.1%	Q: <i>And what is grooming?</i> A: <i>Grooming refers to how perpetrators acquaint children with increasingly intrusive touching or sexuality. ..you have other children who report that perpetrators introduce them to sexuality by playing sexual jokes or talking to them about the birds and the bees or exposing them to pornography or nudity. For children this can make them feel very grown up or it could be very intimidating.</i>
Other grooming	9	9.2%	Q <i>Would you talk about engagement?</i> A: <i>Engagement refers to many children report that they have a relationship with their perpetrators before the abuse begins. They might give the child gifts or take them on special outings or tell the -- compliment the child on how smart they are, how nice they are, or tell the child that they love them and care about them.</i>
Giving gifts	13	13.3%	Q: <i>Have you ever, in your experience, seen a</i>

situation where there is bribery involved when dealing with whether or not the victim discloses?  
 A: Yes. Bribery can both be used as an engagement mechanism, giving money or gifts to establish that relationship, but it can also be used in the final phase, the concealment phase, being offered gifts or money in exchange for the child's silence about the abuse.

Isolating	0	0%	
Illicit Substances	3	3.1%	Q: What is that? A: Grooming refers to how children often report that perpetrators will engage in behaviors that they enjoy like wrestling games, tickling games, lap sitting, snuggling, exchanging back rubs or foot rubs, tucking them into bed at night...Or maybe even introducing drugs or alcohol into the relationship.
Favoritism	11	11.2%	Q: What impact does that have on the victim? A: For children, especially if the perpetrator is somebody who gives gifts and compliments and financial help and things like that, that can often make the children feel quite special and cared for, and they might develop warm feelings for the perpetrator.
<b>Inducement to Secrecy</b>	34	34.7%	
General	12	12.2%	Q: How does -- what does that mean? Explain that to us, please. A: Concealment refers to how many children report that perpetrators will say or do things to encourage them not to tell. Now, many times this can be somewhat manipulative in nature. For example, children are told things like you know you wanted this or you enjoyed it as much as I did, making them feel that sense of complicity in the abuse.
Requests not to tell	9	9.2%	Q: What is secrecy? A: Secrecy is where the offender not only gains the trust, but either insinuates or overtly tells a child that this is to be kept quiet. And that can be done through any number of ways. But the secrecy has to be maintained for the abuse to continue.
Other questions about nondisclosure	5	5.1%	Q: Does this process of concealment, does that relate or sort of interact with what you talked about earlier in terms of delayed disclosure? A: Well, because children might feel pressure to keep quiet about the abuse. Then it makes sense that they would wait months or years before they tell

*someone, or will wait until someone else initiated the disclosure for them.*

Threats not to tell      17      17.3%

*Q: What does concealment mean? A: ...children are told things like this is our secret. If somebody found out we would both be in trouble. Other children are threatened with more social threats, like if you tell no one believe you, or if you tell you will have to go to a foster home and I will go to jail. The family will break apart. Other children are threatened more overtly with harm to their family, or their pets or to the child themselves.*

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**Table 10.**

*Study 4 descriptive statistics for measures of understanding of the victimization process (Disclosure of Abuse Category Scale and Grooming Knowledge Scale) and perceptions of child credibility (Factor 1 and Factor 2).*

Scale	Range	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Disclosure of Abuse Category Scale (1-6 scale)	1-6	4.28	1.07
Grooming Knowledge Scale (1-6 scale)	1-6	5.11	0.85
Credibility Factor 1 (overall credibility; 1-6 scale)	2-6	4.92	0.70
Credibility Factor 2 (fabrication; 1-6 scale)	1-6	4.49	1.22

**Table 11.**  
*Study 4 child credibility questionnaire factor loading.*

Credibility Question	Component	
	1	2
Truthfulness	.733	
Believable	.720	
Credible	.719	
Honest	.683	
Accurate	.679	
Consistent	.670	
Understood	.603	
Intelligent	.506	
Fabricated		.859
Suggestible		.791

**Table 12.**

Study 3 *descriptive statistics for measures of understanding of the victimization process (Disclosure of Abuse Category Scale and Grooming Knowledge Scale) and perceptions of child credibility (Factor 1 and Factor 2) by condition.*

Condition (child testimony, expert testimony)	Disclosure of Abuse Category Scale		Grooming Knowledge Scale		Factor 1 Credibility		Factor 2 Credibility	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Condition 1 (GND, GND)	4.28	1.04	4.91	0.81	4.88	0.70	4.55	1.19
Condition 2 (GND, GD)	4.29	1.08	4.95	0.74	4.81	0.71	4.42	1.22
Condition 3 (GD, GND)	4.27	1.06	5.07	0.78	5.02	0.63	4.58	1.13
Condition 4 (GD, GD)	4.26	1.07	5.01	0.83	4.97	0.70	4.44	1.22



**Figure 1.**

*Study 4 Matrix of Conditions.*

	Transcript (Grooming Description Absent)	Transcript (Grooming Description Present)
Expert testimony (Grooming Description Present)	<b>T: GDA</b> <b>E: GDP</b>	<b>T: GDP</b> <b>E: GDP</b>
Expert testimony (Grooming Description Absent)	<b>T: GDA</b> <b>E: GDA</b>	<b>T: GDP</b> <b>E: GDA</b>

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APPENDIX A

FORENSIC INTERVIEW VIDEO TRANSCRIPTION GUIDE

### **Transcription Steps:**

1. Check out whatever subject/transcript you are working on from the appropriate check-out list.
2. Open the designated template for that study.
3. Do not record child's last initials when filling out subject info.
4. Follow these rules:

### **General Formatting Tips:**

1. Format Q and As by typing Q, no space, colon, one space. Note: this is mainly for forensic interviews.

e.g., Q: How do you know?

A: I felt it.

2. If there is more than one interviewer, use Q for the first interviewer, followed by Q2, Q3, etc. This is for adults in the room only. If they are identifiable as someone other than an interviewer (e.g., mother, lawyer) please note this in the notes section of the checkout list.

The child will always be A. If for some reason there is more than one child, use A followed by A2, A3, etc. If this ever happens, also note in the checkout list that there is more than one child present in the interview and if you can, who the other child is.

3. In general, only transcribe full words. Stutters of a single word, record only the word once.

e.g., "He he he hit me."

Transcribe as: "He hit me."

Also, stutters of part of a word should not be transcribed.

e.g., "So it was his gir, girlfriend?"

Transcribe as: "So it was his girlfriend?"

4. Some repeats of single words are not stutters and should be transcribed. These include repeats used for emphasis, quotes, and the same word used with different meanings. E.g.,

A: It hurt really really bad. (keep the emphasis repeat)

A: She said, "No no no." (keep the quote repeat)

A: I hated that, that time. (keep the word repeat)

5. Repeats that are more than one word need to be transcribed.

e.g., "She was, she was angry." Transcribe as: She was, she was angry.

(Note: the repeat is more than one word).

6. Always end the speaker's (interviewer or child) turn with a period or question mark. Do not use ellipses, dashes, exclamation marks, etc. No ellipses, dashes, or exclamation points should be used at all in a transcript, including at the end of quotes. Also end with a period when the dialogue ends on an incomplete sentence.

7. Spell out abbreviations (don't use periods). E.g.,

Dr. = Doctor  
Mrs. = Missus  
Ms. = Ms  
Miss = Miss  
St. = Street  
Blvd. = Boulevard  
Ave. = Avenue

8. Keep fillers and contractions as is.

e.g., Q: What did he do with his hands?

A: He like touched me. I don't know.

9. If the child quotes someone else, you can transcribe as, but not required:  
e.g., Q: What does your dad say about talking to people?

A: He said, he said, "I'll kill you. I'm watching you," and then looked at me.

Note: the commas before the quotes, and within the quotes.

*If you are going to use quotation marks, you must be consistent. If you can't capture or distinguish all of the quotes, then don't use them at all.*

### **Bracketed Information**

1. Transcribe child's physical actions in brackets *only* if they are relevant to the dialogue..

e.g., A: He was very tall [lifts hands above head].

The action IS relevant and should be transcribed.

A: I ate cereal for breakfast [lifts hand above head].

The action is NOT relevant and should not be transcribed.

Common gestures include:

[shrugs shoulders]

[headshake]

[headnod]  
[points to paper], etc.

Emotional expressions follow the same rule, except for crying. If a child starts to cry, transcribe the instance when this begins.

e.g., [child starts crying]

All other emotional expressions or physical reactions (laugh, giggle, smile, groan, sigh, cough, sneeze, clears throat) only need to be transcribed if this action is referred to in the dialogue.

The following bracketed transcriptions are relevant and therefore correct.

e.g. A: Yeah that's right [laughs].

Q: Why are you laughing?

Or

A: Yeah that's right [sneezes].

Q: Bless you.

The following bracketed transcriptions are irrelevant and therefore incorrect.

e.g., A: Yeah that's right [laughs].

Q: Ok so what happened next?

Or

A: Yeah that's right [sneezes].

Q: Ok so what happened next?

Finally, keep bracketed actions *concise*. They should capture the action but in a manner that is not overly descriptive or lengthy.

e.g., [grabs marker] is good

[grabs one marker from the basket with his hand] is NOT good

2. For words or phrases you cannot make out, put [inaudible]. This includes any whispering, mumbling, trailing off, etc. Do not transcribe it as [whispering]. If you cannot hear or guess what is being said, leave it simply as [inaudible].

e.g., A: [inaudible] went to the park.

3. If you suspect it's a certain word, but are not 100% sure, put in brackets with a question mark.

e.g., A: He [shaked?] me really hard.

Note: Please use [inaudible] and [X?] sparingly. Use common sense to fill in the blanks. For example, if the child had been saying "He shaked me" throughout the interview, and you can confidently tell she's saying "shaked"

again but it's just a little mumbled, you don't have to put in the hard brackets.

In addition, if the interview was conducted by a staff member in the lab, you can always ask them what they think the inaudible word was. Usually, the interviewer will remember or will have notes from the interview.

4. Periods or question marks go **outside** of the brackets, always. This includes pauses, exiting and entering the room, (gestures and physical actions?), and all timestamps including those marking the beginning and end of the interview.

5. Bracketed movements should not stand as their own sentence unless it is the child's only response. Example:

A: I like that bear. [Points to toy]. *Should be transcribed as:*

A: I like that bear [points to toy].

6. For words in Spanish, put the Spanish in brackets. If you know the English word put it **after** the foreign word.  
e.g., A: My [tía] aunt took me to the park.

If there are large portions of the interview conducted in Spanish, please indicate this as:

Q: What did he say to you? [SPANISH 00:16:21 – 00:16:30].

A: For I could get rid of the sick.

**Note:** If there is Spanish in the interview, then it should be recorded on the Google Doc check-out list under the column, "Translate: Spanish [XX:XX:XX – XX:XX:XX]." The above example would read, "Spanish [00:16:21 – 00:16:30]" in the appropriate column. A Spanish-speaking RA can then go back through the specific portion of the interview and translate and transcribe the Spanish portion.

### **Time Intervals and Pauses**

1. Indicate time intervals every two minutes by inserting the time in brackets indicated on your video player when it occurs during the talking, and not on a separate line.

e.g., Q: What did he do next?

A: He reached over [00:02:00] and handed me some paper.

Q: You said he handed you some paper, tell me more about that.

2. Timestamps follow a [hour: minute: second] format, such as [00:04:14].



3. If a transcript begins in the middle of a DVD (if it's the second interview on one disk), begin the 2-minute markers according to the time it began. For example, if the interview begins 01:42:13, the next time stamp would be [01:44:00], then [01:46:00] and so on.

Note: This is different than *one interview with multiple video parts*.

4. If one forensic interview has multiple parts (video clips/files), transcribe timestamps in the normal 2-minute intervals for each part, but then start again from 00:00:00 at the start of the next part/video. Take note of what part it is for the first and last timestamp for each clip, but the timestamps in between do not need to say what part it is.

e.g., [Part 1 interviewer and child enters room 00:00:00]  
[00:02:00]

...

[Part 1 ends XX:XX:XX] [Part 2 starts 00:00:00]  
[00:02:00]

...

[Part 2 interview ends XX:XX:XX]

5. If the time interval (or anything bracketed, such as pauses, gestures, etc.) is at the end of one speaker's turn, this bracketed time interval should be *inside* the sentence.

Example: Q: What happened next [00:04:00]?

(Incorrect: Q: What happened next? [00:04:00]. or Q: What happened next? [00:04:00])

6. Pauses: Use the following formatting for any pauses 3 seconds or longer:

Q: Question asked [X second pause].

A: Answer [X second pause] answer.

e.g., Q: How did you feel? [4 second pause] Tell me how it felt.

A: I thought [4 second pause] I thought he was mad.

Pauses should be indicated during both the interviewers' and the children's turns. For some interviews, the interviewer will talk on the phone with another individual in the observation room. Indicate when the person on the other end of the line is speaking (and the audio is not captured on the DVD) with pauses, e.g:

Q: [Phone rings] Hello? [8 second pause] Ok. [10 second pause] Ok, I will. Thank you [hangs up phone]. Where were you when he touched you?

A: We were in the bathroom.

Note: If there is a pause between turns, pause should go at the END of one person's turn.

7. Entrances and Exits:

After the last speaker before an exit speaks, indicate the exit and enter times on the same line in brackets.e.g. Q: I am going to give you a break and I am going to give me a break. I am going to look over my notes and see if I have any more questions for you. While I am gone, I want you to think about something else that you want to tell me [Interviewer exits and enters room 00:20:00-00:25:00]. What did you think about while I was gone?

Also for these instances, do not transcribe time stamps within the interval. In the above exaple, the interviewer is gone from 00:20:00 to 00:25:00. If the interviewer hadn't exited, normally you would be transcribing [00:20:00], [00:22:00], and [00:24:00] at the appropriate times. However, this does NOT need to be done during intervals.

8. However, if the child talks to him/herself during break or gets up, follow this format:

Q: While I am gone, I want you to think about something else that you want to tell me [interviewer exits room 00:34:15].

A: She is so mean. I hate that interviewer. I wonder when this was over.

Q: [interviewer enters room 00:37:19] What did you think about while I was gone?

### **Disfluencies**

1. Transcribe disfluencies only when they constitute a turn or are the utterance **directly** before a bracketed pause (if it is the only thing that a speaker says).

e.g. Q: What did he say?

A: Um.

Q: Do you remember?

**DO** transcribe the "um" because it's all the child says between questions.

Q: What happened?

A: Well um [4 second pause]. He hurt me.

**DO** transcribe the "um" because it's directly before bracketed pause.

Compare: **Do NOT** transcribe the "um" because it is part of the child's turn.

Q: What did he say?

A: ~~Um~~ Nothing.

--Or--

Q: What happened [4 second pause]?

A: ~~Um~~, He hurt me.

Disfluencies include:

Um

Er

Uh  
Mm

### **Facilitators**

1. Use parentheses for interviewer facilitators e.g.:

Q: Tell me what happened next?

A: Then we went to the house (uh-huh) and we played with the cat (uh-huh).  
And then we ate.

2. When uttered during the child's speech, they do NOT constitute a turn for the interviewer, and are just put in parentheses during the child's speech.  
e.g. A: And then he talked to me (uh-huh). And he was mad (uh-huh). And then he didn't say more.

*Note:* Sometimes, an interviewer will use two facilitators at once. Transcribe as:

A: And then he talked to me (oh, uh-huh). And he was mad.

*Note:* If it sounds like the interviewer is about to ask another question, but only says "ok" or "uh-huh" before the child continues, still consider it a facilitator and include it in parentheses in the child's response, not as a separate line for the interviewer.

3. When uttered right before the interviewer asks another question, do not put in parentheses, e.g.:

Q: Tell me what happened next.

A: He went to the bathroom.

Q: Uh-huh. Then what happened?

However, if the interviewer repeats or rephrases what the child said, this is NOT considered a facilitator, and should get its own line e.g.:

Q: Ok, and tell me about some things that you like to do outside.

A: I like playing basketball.

Q: Basketball, uh-huh.

A: I like jump roping.

4. If a facilitator was uttered, and then a pause, but still no answer was elicited, record it, e.g.:

Q: What happened in the bathroom?

A: He touched.

Q: Uh-huh [3 second pause]. What happened next?

5. "And" and "So" are **separate questions**, and would be considered turns for the interviewer, e.g., Q: What did he say?

A: He said he was going to hit me.  
Q: And?  
A: Then he said he was mad.  
Q: Ok, so?  
A: So I was sad.

The following are standard spellings for facilitators:

(uh-huh)  
(mm-hmm)  
(hmm)  
(oh)  
(ooh) [this is the “oo” sound, as in “hoot.”]  
(ok)  
(mk)  
(right)  
(yeah)  
(yes)  
(all right)  
(yep)  
(huh)  
(I see)

These words might *not* be a facilitator if used in one of two instances. The first is if the interviewer is using it as a question for clarification to the child.  
e.g., A: I have a brown dog.

Q: Yeah?

A: Yes, he’s nice.

The second instance is when the interviewer is using it as a response to the child’s question.

e.g., A: You mean my dad?

Q: Mm-hmm (yes).

Note: Whenever mm-hmm or uh-huh are used as answers and not facilitators, they must be followed by their actual meaning, (yes).

Also, anything the child says gets its own line and is never transcribed as a facilitator.

### **Nods, Shakes, Gestures, and Yes/Nos**

1. Transcribe head shakes and nods as:  
[headshake] or [headnod]

Note: nod is yes, shake is no. These should never be transcribed as [shakes head] or [nods head].

2. Yes and No answers:

uh-huh = means “yes”

uh-uh = means “no”

mm-hmm = means “yes” (rising intonation, mouth closed)

mm-mm = means “no” (flat intonation, mouth closed)

iunno = means I don’t know (just the sound, mouth closed or open – different than ‘I dunno.’)

3. If any of the above responses are used, write the meaning in parentheses after its use: (I don’t know), (yes), or (no).

Note that “mm-hmm” can be used as a facilitator OR a response to a question. If the latter, include (yes) afterward!

Q: Will you tell me what happened when he touched you?

A: Mm-hmm (yes).

Q: Ok, tell me what happened next.

A: Iunno (I don’t know).

4. Standardized slang yes and no:

Yep

Nope

Yeah

### Common Slang and Word Spellings

1. Common words:

Dunno

Iunno

Imma (I’m going to)

Ew or eww

Owie

Whoa

Oops (standard spelling, no matter how long the syllable is drawn out)

Gonna

Gotta

Shoulda

Coulda

Woulda

Huh

Kinda

Lotsa

All right (**not** ‘alright’)

Aint (**no** apostrophe)

TV (**all** capital letters, **no** periods)

2. Use apostrophes for:

‘cause (since “cause” is a totally different word)

‘til

‘bout

3. As a general rule, we want to avoid using hyphens so if the two (or three or four words) can stand on their own (i.e. they are actual words) if so DO NOT use a hyphen.

Compare the following:

Hip hop: transcribed as “hip hop,” as both “hip” and “hop” are legitimate words.

Jello-ish: transcribed as “jello-ish” as “ish” is a suffix used to accompany a noun.

Common Non-hyphenated words:

StepX (stepfather, stepbrother, etc. No hyphen.)

Bandaid

Tippy toes

Hip hop

Hide and Go Seek

Belly Button

Workout

Peepee (no space)

X year old (E.g.: “I was a four year old”)

Common Hyphenated words:

Uh-oh

4. If a child spells out a word letter-by-letter, use hyphens, not periods.

Example:

A: My name is Elyse. E. L. Y. S. E. *should be transcribed as:*

A: My name is Elyse. E-L-Y-S-E.

5. If a child says numbers, follow these guidelines:

Numbers 1-10 should be spelled out (i.e., one, two, three...ten).

Numbers larger than 10 should be numerical (i.e., 11, 12, 13, etc.)

If a sentence begins with the number, then spell it out:

Q: How many times did it happen?

A: Twelve times, I think.

6. If a child mentions time, it should be written as numbers, with a colon, e.g., 1:30 (not one-thirty or one thirty).

7. Placement numbers (first, second, third) should be spelled out until tenth, then 11<sup>th</sup> and onward should be numerical.

### **Common Grammar to Note**

Principal = director of school (I was “pals” with my principal.)

Principle = a rule or belief governing behavior

They’re v. their v. there

They’re (they are) = They’re coming to visit next week.

Their (possessive) = Their dog is misbehaved.

There (location) = The shoes are over there. (think over here, over there)

It’s v. its

It’s (it is) = It’s a beautiful morning.

Its (possessive) = Its favorite chew toy is the mouse.

Singular possessive v. plural possessive, e.g.

Baby’s (one baby, possesses something) = The baby’s crib is a light green.

Babies’ (many babies, possessing something) = At the hospital, the babies’ wing is painted blue.

You’re v. Your

You’re (you are) = You’re looking lovely today.

Your (possessive) = Your shoes are looking lovely today.

### **Beginning and ending of interviews**

1. We always begin the interview with hard brackets with the timestamp of when the interview starts. Usually, this is the time you first hear talking. For forensic interviews, you **MUST** start transcribing the second the interview starts, even if there is a long pause before anything is said.

e.g., Q: [Interview starts 00:00:00] Ok we’re in this room. So take a seat right here in that chair. Ok so while we talk today, if I ask you a question and you don’t know the answer, just say I don’t know.

Sometimes the video starts in the middle of the interviewer’s sentence. The interview start time would be [00:00:00]

e.g., Q: [Interview starts 00:00:00] That chair. Ok, so while we talk today, if I ask you a question and you don’t know the answer, just say I don’t know.

2. We always end the interview with hard brackets the time stamp of when both interviewer and child exit the room after the interview is done **OR** when the video cuts off at the end.

e.g., Q: Thanks for answering all my questions. Let's walk back to the lobby now [interview ends 00:47:01].

e.g., Q: Thanks for answering all my questions. Let's walk [interview ends 00:46:58].

Note: for forensic interviews, transcribe everything from the very start of the video

### **Redacting**

Do not transcribe identifiable information so long as it is connected to the child, family, friends, relatives, neighbors, teachers, or anyone else being mentioned due to their connection to the child. You do NOT have to redact this information for investigators of the case. Information to redact was last names, school names, street addresses or dwelling names, phone numbers, and places of employment that are very specific. You redact by using appropriate placeholders such as [lastname], [address], [apartment], [store], etc.

e.g., Q: Tell me about yourself.

A: My name is Jane Smith. I live in Beach View Apartments, on 123 Main Street, Los Angeles, California. My teacher is Mister Johnson at Hoover Elementary. My mom's name is Susan Smith. She works at the Target on Jefferson Street. My dad's name is Joe Smith. He works at University Tire shop. Yesterday a policeman named Officer Sanchez came to talk to me.

*Transcribe as:*

Q: Tell me about yourself.

A: My name is Jane [lastname]. I live in [apartment], on [address], Los Angeles, California. My teacher is Mister [lastname] at [school]. My mom's name is Susan [lastname]. She works at the Target on [street]. My dad's name is Joe [lastname]. He works at [place]. Yesterday a policeman named Officer Sanchez came to talk to me.

*Note: Pauses, timestamps, and entrances/exits are also bracketed. Please see the following section titled "Time Intervals and Pauses."*



APPENDIX B

PHOENIX CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL CONSENT FOR EXAMINATION AND  
INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEW GIVEN TO PARENTS



APPENDIX C

STUDY 1 GROOMING CODING GUIDE: FORENSIC INTERVIEWS

1. Does the question-answer pair reference a grooming behavior (see #4) or tactic to maintain the child's secrecy (see #6)?
  - Yes - code 1
  - No - stop coding
  
2. Code question-answer pair for type of grooming:
  - 4a – behaviors to increase compliance with sexual acts
    - Includes exposure to R rated movies, gift giving, boundary pushing, isolating, favoritism, providing elicited substances, teaching abnormal touch ideals*
    - E.G.: TELL ME MORE ABOUT THE PRESENT HE GAVE YOU.
  
  - 4b – behaviors to induce secrecy
    - Tactics to maintain the child's secrecy include treats not to tell, requests not to tell, and other questions about non-disclosure.*
    - E.G.: Q: YOU WANTED TO YELL, BUT HE DID SOMETHING? A:...HE SAID DON'T TELL ANYONE.
  
3. Code the question-answer pair for type of grooming behaviors to increase compliance with sexual acts:
  - 5a - exposure to R-rated movies
    - Includes exposure to pornography, exposure to pornographic magazines and photos*
    - E.G.: HAVE YOU EVER SEEN LIKE MOVIES OR MAGAZINES OR THINGS ON THE INTERNET OR A TABLET OR CELLPHONE THAT SHOWED PEOPLE WITH NO CLOTHES ON OR?
  
  - 5b - gift giving
    - Includes giving the child trips if not a family member*
    - E.G.: AND [redacted] GAVE YOU A TREAT? A:HEADNOD.
  
  - 5c - boundary pushing
    - Tickling, hugging, wrestling, sitting on lap) and boundary violation such as bathing, sleeping in the same bed or room as the child, nudity around the child*
    - E.G.: DID [redacted] EVER GIVE BACK RUBS OR SHOULDER RUBS?
  
  - 5d - isolating
    - Spending alone time with the child (must explicitly mention that the child was alone), does not include being alone for the actual abuse*
    - E.G.: AND YOU WENT ON TRIPS JUST THE TWO OF YOU?

5e - favoritism

*Explicitly mentions treating the other siblings differently or questions about how the child was treated positively by the perpetrator.*

E.G.: YOU SAID YOU WERE THE FAVORITE. TELL ME MORE ABOUT THAT.

5f - illicit substances

*Providing illicit substances to the child*

E.G.: WERE YOU SMOKING OR DRINKING BEFORE THIS?

5g - teaching abnormal touch

*Teaching abnormal touch, contact, and sex ideals to the child. This does not include good touch bad touch questions which is age appropriate sex education.*

NO EXAMPLES PROVIDED IN TRANSCRIPTS.

5h - other forms of grooming

4. Code question-answer pair for type of inducement to secrecy:

7a - threats not to tell and consequences of disclosure

E.G.: TELL ME EVERYTHING [redacted] SAID WHEN THIS HAPPENED. A: HE SAID DON'T TELL DAD OR ILL GET IN SERIOUS TROULBE BY HIM.

7b - requests not to tell

E.G.: Q: WELL HAS ANYONE EVER TOLD YOU TO KEEP A SECRET ABOUT SOMETHING? A: HEADHSAKE.

7c - other questions about nondisclosure

E.G.: Q: DID SOMETHING MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE YOU COULDN'T TELL YOUR MOM AND DAD? A: YEAH I WAS JUST REALLY AFRIAD TO TELL HER, ADSN THINK SHE WOULDN'T BELIEVE ME.

APPENDIX D

STUDY 1 AND 2: CASE CHARACTERISTIC CODING GUIDE

Code for each of the following variables:

**1. Child Age (age)**

**2. Number of Perpetrators (Perp\_N)**

Description: How many perpetrators of sexual abuse are mentioned within the transcript?

Notes:

All perpetrators of sexual abuse mentioned within the narrative are counted. If there are multiple perpetrators across multiple instances of abuse, for each perpetrator's worst abuse act code for: **perpetrator relationship, severity and frequency**.

Ex. "When I was young my dad used to make me touch his thing a lot...My uncle once made me take my clothes off and then he took pictures"

- For these types of disclosures, you will code perp relationship, severity, and frequency for the father's abuse, and then code those three variables again classifying the uncle's abuse (i.e., you will have a set of three variables for father's abuse and another three for the uncle's abuse).

But, if there is one act committed by multiple offenders (e.g., gang rape) you will not code relationship, severity, and frequency for each perpetrator involved in the single incident, but rather you will code the relationship as a group code (e.g., "12-foster siblings plural"), and then code the severity and frequency for the event as a whole.

Ex. "Usually what happens is my mom holds me down as my dad puts his thing in my vagina"

- Perpetrator relationship= "3- Both biological parents"
- Severity= "11-intercourse"
- Frequency = "2- More than one time"

Note: if the act is committed by multiple offenders, but there is no single value code that will capture them (e.g., 3- Both biological parents, 19 – Friends plural), code perp relationship as "31 – Other (specify in TBD)" and specify who was involved (e.g., brother and cousin).

**3. Perpetrator relationship (Perp\_Relationship)**

Description: Who is the perpetrator of the sexual abuse? The codes are hierarchical, that is, they go in order of assumed proximity to child. The child/perpetrator relationship might be clear immediately. However, in many cases it will not be.

Notes:

If the child/perpetrator relationship is explicitly stated as multiple values (e.g., friend *and* neighbor), use the value that is *closest* in proximity to the child (i.e., the smallest number).

Ex. Child says that John (a grown-up) touched her and specifies that John is her *neighbor and* her friend

- Code "18-Friend (adult)"
- DO NOT CODE "20-Neighbor."

Many children's description of the relationship was vague. If the child's description is specific enough to identify a category, but still vague enough that you are not sure which category it is, then code conservatively, that is, code for the higher of the two values.

Ex. "There's a man who lives in our house, he is my mom's friend"

- Code "31- Other (specify)" and specify that it is mom's friend
- DO NOT CODE "8- Stepdad/Mom's boyfriend"

Use the "Other (specify)" category when there is no value to capture the relationship the child has to the perpetrator (e.g., "my friend's dad") or when the child does not specify a relationship (e.g., "someone named Chris"). *Do not assume what the child's relationship to the perp is* (e.g., "a friend of my brother" does not mean he is a friend to the child); make the decision based on exact verbal language and obvious contextual evidence.

*Perpetrator Relationship Codes:*

- 1 – Biological mother
- 2 – Biological father
- 3 – Both biological parents
- 4 – Foster mother
- 5 – Foster father
- 6 – Both foster parents
- 7 – Stepmother/Dad's girlfriend
- 8 – Stepfather/Mom's boyfriend
- 9 – Biological sibling
- 10 – Biological siblings plural
- 11 – Foster sibling
- 12 – Foster siblings plural
- 13 – Stepsibling
- 14 – Stepsiblings plural
- 15 – Grandparent
- 16 – Grandparents plural
- 17 – Other family member (specify in TBD)
- 18 – Friend (adult; adult is classified as over 18)
- 18.5 Friend (peer) (specify if older, younger, same age, or unknown; if unsure if the perp is an adult or a peer- code as peer)
- 19 – Friends plural
- 20 – Neighbor
- 21 – Sitter/daycare provider
- 22 – Teacher
- 23 – Teachers plural
- 24 – Principal
- 25 – Coach
- 26 – Spiritual leader (e.g., preacher, minister, deacon, priest, etc.)



- 27 – Police/law enforcement
- 28 – Therapist/Social worker/counselor
- 29 – Stranger
- 30 – Unspecified (anybody, anyone)
- 31 – Other (specify in TBD)
- 98 – NA

#### **4. Relationship Follow-up (Perp\_Relationship\_Specify)**

Description: If the code for Perpetrator relationship is “31-Other (specify)” then identify the relationship.

#### **5. Severity of abuse (Severity)**

Description: What is the worst act of sexual abuse that is mentioned by the child?

Notes:

Some children will only disclose one act of abuse, while other will disclose that multiple acts of abuse occurred. In instances of multiple acts, choose the act that is the most severe (per perp/instance) according to the below values. The categories for this variable occur in descending order of severity, with the smaller numbered values being less severe. You will code the act that corresponds to the highest value below.

Ex. “he put his finger in my front part and then put his thing in my butt”

- Code “12- Sodomy”
- DO NOT CODE “7- digital/genital/anal contact of child (digital penetration to vagina or anus of child)”

Many children will describe an act of abuse without clarifying certain aspects. If the child’s description could fall under two categories, then code conservatively, that is, code for the less severe of the two values.

Ex. “He touched my chest”

- Code “1- fondling over clothes of child by offender”
- DO NOT CODE “3- fondling under the clothes of child by offender”

If the description given by the child is so vague that more than two codes could be probable, or the act may not even be categorized as abuse if details are revealed, then the severity is coded as unclear.

Ex. “he touched me” (without the child providing where she was “touched”)

- Code= “15-unclear”

*Severity Codes:*

- 0 – exhibitionism/voyeurism/exposure to porn (perp exposed genitals, exposed child’s genitals, showed pornography to child)
- .5 – kissing (kissing occurred on the lips, or anywhere below the chin, not including genitals)

- 1 – fondling over clothes of child by offender (perp touched child’s chest, butt, or genitals or immediately surrounding areas over clothes or over undergarments)
- 2 – fondling over clothes of offender by child (child touched perp’s chest, butt, or genitals or immediately surrounding areas over clothes or over undergarments)
- 3 – fondling under clothes of child by offender (perp touched child’s chest, butt, or genitals or immediately surrounding areas under clothes or under undergarments)
- 4 – fondling under clothes of offender by child (child touched perp’s chest, butt, or genitals or immediately surrounding areas under clothes or under undergarments)
- 5 – naked fondling of child by offender (perp touched child’s body while child was naked)
- 6 – naked fondling of offender by child (child touched perp’s body while child was naked)
- 7 – digital genital/anal contact of child (digital penetration to vagina or anus of child)
- 8 – digital genital/anal contact of offender (digital penetration to vagina or anus of perp)
- 9 – oral copulation of child by offender (offender put mouth on child’s genitals or anus)
- 10 – oral copulation of offender by child (child put mouth on perp’s genitals or anus)
- 10.5 – simulated or attempted intercourse (perp humped child or vice versa, attempted to insert genitals into child’s vagina or anus or child attempted this to perp, perp had the child masturbate them, or perp masturbated the child)
- 10.8 – vaginal penetration with foreign object (perp inserts a non-body part into child’s vagina or vice versa)
- 11 – intercourse (genital to genital penetration)
- 11.5 – anal penetration with foreign object (perp inserts a non-body part into child’s anus or vice versa)
- 12 – sodomy (recipient child- perp inserts penis into child’s anus)
- 13 – sodomy (recipient offender- child inserts penis into perp’s anus)
- 14 – other (specify) (reserved for acts otherwise not captured by the codes but still more severe than the others (that can be classified) mentioned, such as bondage of child, or peer to peer contact where the perp was describe as a friend and the act was not described as involuntary)
- 15 – unclear/can’t determine (child uses vague but sexual language such as perp molested, violated them, etc.)

#### **6. Severity Follow-up (Severity\_Specify)**

Description: If the code for Severity is “14-Other” then identify the nature of the abuse.

## **7. Frequency of Abuse (Frequency)**

Description: How often did sexual abuse occur? This code applies to sexual abuse *in general* and not just the most severe act of abuse. Frequency is measured as an inter-event variable rather than an intra-event variable, that is, what is the number of abusive episodes, not abusive acts within one episode.

Note:

You can use the certain aspects of the child's speech patterns to determine frequency. You can use adverbs of frequency (e.g., always, sometimes, usually). However, children's use of present tense alone without an adverb of frequency does not indicate a frequency (e.g. "He touches me" this statement alone does not indicate the abuse happened more than once).

*Frequency of Abuse:*

- 0 – Unknown (child does not say if the sexual abuse happened on one time or more than one time, or, if the child does not use language that indicates frequency).
- 1 – One time (child specifies that there was only one episode of abuse, or the context of the abuse makes it clear it was a one-time occurrence (e.g., a stranger rape))
- 2 – More than one time (child uses language that indicates frequency (see above note), e.g. "He touches me all the time," or describes multiple episodes)
- 3- Inconsistent (child gives conflicting information about frequency; child describes only one episode of abuse, but when asked about frequency is uncertain or gives inconsistent responses, or vice versa).

## **8. Victim Gender**

*Please code for the victim gender. This can be gathered by the victim's name or discussion by the court referring to the victim's using gendered pronouns. If child gender cannot be identified, please code "2" – unidentifiable.*

- 0 – Male
- 1 – Female
- 2 – Unidentifiable

## **9. Perpetrator Gender**

*Next, you will code for perpetrator gender. Existing case characteristics codes can tell you what the perpetrator gender is. Other times, you will need to go into the transcript to find the perpetrators gender. Many times, there is one perpetrator with an easily identifiable gender. Other times, you will have multiple perpetrators. If the perpetrators are, for example, both parents, you will code for "2" – mixed. Other times, you may need to code separately for each perpetrator. For example, if both parents are the perpetrator and the child also mentions that they were abused by their uncle. You would code "2"*

*for both parents, and then “0” for the uncle. Or if the perpetrator is the child’s brother and they go on to mention abuse by a family friend (male), you would code “0” for the brother and “0” for the family friend. This matches the existing case characteristics coding structure for separate perpetrators. If you cannot identify the perpetrators gender, code “3” – unidentifiable.*

0 – Male

1 – Female

2 – Mixed

3 – Unidentifiable

APPENDIX E

STUDY 1 AND 2: QUESTION TYPE CODING GUIDE

**Identify a question marked as referencing grooming and seduction (see coding guide C and E). ONLY code these question-answer pairs for question type.**

### **HIERARCHY OF QUESTION TYPES**

- Some questions will fall into multiple “question type” codes. For these questions use the ranking system below. Always default to the code that corresponds the *lowest value* below:
  1. Tell me more
  2. DYK/DYR/Can you
  3. Statement
  4. Forced Choice
  5. “Wh”
  6. Tag
  7. Negative Term
  8. Y/N
  9. Other
  10. Not A Question (NAQ)

Note: You can code a forced choice/YN/WHY as embedded within “DYK/DYR/Can you” questions

#### **1) Question Coding**

0 – **yes/no question:** Can the question be answered with a yes or no?

- E.g.: “*Were your pants on?*”
- Includes any fragments that can be coded as yes/no
  - E.g.: “*And did he?*”
- If the interviewer uses a phrase such as “I’m wondering if X” and the question can be rephrased as “Did X,” code as YN.
- No?, Yea?, and Really? by themselves. (Change if included with other statement or questions)

1 – **forced choice:** Are there multiple options so that the child chooses among the answers? (Note: the presence of “or” is a good indication it is a forced choice question)

- E.g.: “*Did he put his hand inside your pants or outside your pants?*”
- E.g.: “*Did he put his hands inside your pants, outside your pants, or something else?*”

2 – **tag:** Does the question include a tag, such as “doesn’t/isn’t he” or “does he.” Tags was at most 3 words (“right?” or “wasn’t it?”) at the end of a question. (Note: Tags are generally used in declarative statements)

- E.g.: “*Now your pants were on, weren’t they?*”
- E.g.: “*He said he’d hurt you, right?*”
- E.g.: “*You said that, is that right?*”
- Huh, yeah, right, etc. at end of indicates tag, even if transcribed as separate from the question.

- E.g.: “*So he was there. Huh?*” would be coded as a tag question.
- E.g.: “*So he was there. Huh.*” would be coded as NOT a question.

3 – **negative term**: Does the question include a negative term (with a contraction of “not”)

- E.g.: “*Isn’t it true you told Mr. Steffon that your pants were off?*”
- E.g.: “*Aren’t you saying that your pants were on?*”

4 – **‘WH’ questions**: Does the question ask who, what, where, when, why, or which.

- E.g.: “*Where were your pants?*”
- Code for questions even if they are just a wh- (i.e. What? Who? Why?)
- E.g.: “*Tell me what he did.*” \*counts as “WH” question even though starts with “tell me”

5 – **‘How’ questions**: Does the question ask how?

- E.g.: “*How did he take your pants off?*”
- E.g.: “*How come he did that?*”
- E.g.: “*Tell me how he did that.*” \*counts as “how” question even though starts with “tell me”

6 – **Statement questions**: Would the question be a proper sentence if one dropped the question mark?

- E.g.: “*Your pants were off?*” (NOT “*Did he/you take your pants off?*”)
- E.g.: “*You don’t remember telling us that your clothes were never taken off?*” (Although this may initially seem like a negative term question, since the negative term is not the first word it is actually a statement question).
- E.g.: “*You have more questions?*” is a statement question.
  - E.g.: “*Do you have any more questions?*” is NOT a statement question (yes/no)
  - E.g.: “*Any more questions?*” is NOT a statement question (yes/no)
  - E.g.: “*That you got new toys? Ok.*” Ignore the OK. This is a statement question (even though it would technically be a fragment, without the “That” it is a statement. Use this rule if there is a “That” at the beginning of the sentence).

7 – **Do you know/remember/can you questions**:

- Interviewer begins/ends questions by asking whether the child remembers/knows/recalls/thinks/or “can you tell us.”
- INCLUDE “*could you tell me*”, “*could you tell us*” “*could you say*” “*can you show us*”
- Do NOT include past-tense “could you tell” questions, such as “*could you tell if it was dark*” when the distinction is whether the “could you tell” refers to the time of the event rather than NOW. Only code DYK/DYR if it refers to NOW.
  - E.g.: “*Do you remember if your pants were on? When the first time happened at Isidro’s house, were your clothes on, do you*”

*remember? Do you know now many times he took your clothes off?  
Can you tell me how many times your clothes came off? You were  
playing outside and X happened, do you remember that?"*

- Negative term questions involving “Don’t you know” or “can’t you show us,” etc., are not considered DYK. Code as Negative Term.
  - E.g.: “*You were playing outside, don’t you remember?*”
  - E.g.: “*Don’t you remember if you were playing outside?*”
- DYK/R are prioritized over forced choice, but we code for embedded forced choice in the Embedded variable.
  - E.g.: “*Do you know if it was dark or light?*” would be coded as DYK, with a forced-choice code for the Embedded variable.
- **Do not code instructions phrased as questions** that begin with “can you” as “can you” questions. They should be coded as NAQ.
  - E.g.: “*Can you sit down?*”
  -

### 8 – Tell me more/about

True “tell me” questions will ask the child to **elaborate on information already provided** in the interview. Common prompts include: “Tell me **more** about X,” “Tell me **everything** about [previously mentioned topic],” etc.

- E.g.: “*Tell me **everything** about him touching you.*”
- E.g.: “*Tell me **more** about him touching you*”
- E.g.: “*Tell me **about** him touching you.*”
  
- When an interviewer asks a question that begins with “tell me” that **does not** ask for elaboration, code as the question type within the tell-me phrase. E.g.: “Tell me why he did that” = Why did he do that, WH question
- E.g.: “Tell me about where you were” = Where were you, WH question.
- E.g.: “Tell me if he was under you.” = Was he under you, YN question.

Phrases similarly asking for elaboration from the child fall under the “tell me” category.

- E.g.: Q: **Help me understand** what you were thinking = **tell me** *what* you were thinking = WH
- E.g.: Q: **So I need to know** everything about Pedro. = **Tell me** everything about Pedro. = Tell me.

### 9 – Not a question

- Common examples of NAQ:
  - Q: “Remember that you took an oath.”
  - Q: “My name is Mr. Bailey, and I represent your father.”
  - Q: “Yeah? Good.” (by itself is YN)
  - Q: “No? Ok.” (by itself is YN)
  - Q: “Really? All right.” (by itself is YN)
  - Clear echoes from the interviewer that do not prompt additional information. If with question mark, code. If not, then it’s NAQ.



10 – **Other/unclassifiable** (specify).

“Hmm?”. “Pardon?”. “I’m sorry” “Excuse me?” are coded as other.

**2b) Other** (specify from variable 10) (write a *brief* explanation as to why the question counts as “other”).

APPENDIX F

STUDY 2 GROOMING CODING GUIDE: TRIAL TRANSCRIPTS

**Inclusion question:**

Does the line of questioning address grooming?

No - 0 (if no stop coding)

Yes - 1

**Source of grooming info:**

Attorney question - 1

Child response - 2

**Form of Grooming**

**1. Grooming to facilitate compliance**

1a - Exposure to R-rated Movies

*Includes exposure to pornography, exposure to pornographic magazines and photos.*

No - 0

Yes - 1

E.g.: Q. AND YOU NEVER SAW [DEFENDANT] SHOWING ANY MOVIES THAT HAD BAD THINGS LIKE A BUNCH OF NAKED PEOPLE IN IT, DID YOU?

1b - Giving gifts (includes giving the child trips)

No - 0

Yes - 1

E.g.: Q. -- YOUR DAD WOULD BUY YOU SOME LITTLE PRESENTS; IS THAT RIGHT?

1c - Boundary Pushing (excessive tickling, hugging, wrestling, sitting on lap) and boundary violation such as bathing, sleeping in the same bed or room as the child, nudity around the child

No - 0

Yes - 1

E.g.: Q. WHEN HE STOPPED ASKING, YOU TALKED FOR ANOTHER FEW MINUTES, WENT TO SLEEP. DID YOU FEEL AT ALL UNSAFE SLEEPING IN THE BED IN YOUR FATHER'S ROOM?

E.g.: Q. EVERYBODY WAS WRESTLING AND PLAYING. YOU WERE KIND OF DOWN ON YOUR HANDS AND KNEES OVER AGAINST A WALL?

1d - Isolating the child or spending alone time with the child (must explicitly mention that the child was alone), does not include being alone for the actual abuse

No - 0

Yes - 1

E.g.: Q. PRIOR TO AUGUST 16TH, WOULD IT BE FAIR TO SAY THAT [DEFENDANT] NEVER TRIED TO GET YOU ALONE FROM OTHER CHILDREN IN THE HOME?

1e - Favoritism towards the child

*Explicitly mentions treating the other siblings differently or questions about how the child was treated positively by the perpetrator.*

No - 0

Yes - 1

E.g.: Q. DO YOU THINK HE TREATED YOU LIKE A FAVORITE, LIKE HIS FAVORITE GRANDDAUGHTER? A. YEAH.

1f - Providing illicit substances to the child

No - 0

Yes - 1

E.g.: Q. BOTH YOU AND YOUR DAD WERE DRINKING TOGETHER; RIGHT?

1g - Teaching abnormal touch, contact, and sex ideals to the child

*This does not include good touch bad touch questions which is age appropriate sex education.*

No - 0

Yes - 1

Q. AND DO YOU KNOW HOW COME HE TOLD YOU THAT? HOW TO USE A VIBRATOR? A. I DON'T KNOW.

1h - Other form of grooming

No - 0

Yes - 1

1g. Specify

## 2. Grooming to Maintain Secrecy

2a - Threats not to tell and consequences of disclosure

No - 0

Yes - 1

E.G.: Q. ASHLEY, YOU ALSO TESTIFIED THAT YOUR FATHER THREATENED YOU? Q. AND SAID THAT IF YOU TOLD ANYONE, YOU'D BE TAKEN AWAY?

2b - Requests not to tell

No - 0

Yes - 1

E.G.: Q. WHEN HE ASKED YOU NOT TO TELL ANYBODY ABOUT WHAT THE CONVERSATION THAT YOU HAD HAD, DID HE TELL YOU WHY HE WOULD RATHER THAT YOU NOT TELL ANYBODY?

2c -Other questions about non-disclosure specifically related to the perpetrator inducement to secrecy

No - 0

Yes - 1

2d. Specify

E.G.: Q. DID HE EVER -- OR HAS HE EVER KIND OF MADE YOU PROMISES, YOU KNOW, IF YOU JUST SAY DIFFERENT THINGS THAT WILL GET YOU SOMETHING NICE OR TAKE YOU SOMEWHERE NICE, ANYTHING LIKE THAT?

APPENDIX G

STUDY 3 GROOMING CODING GUIDE: EXPERT TESTIMONY

**Inclusion question:**

Does the line of questioning address grooming (the specific process of how a child is groomed or seduced before the abuse began) or secrecy maintenance tactics (the ways in which the perpetrator prevented disclosure)?

No - 0 (if no stop coding)

Yes - 1

E.g.: Q: Are familiar with the process of victimization?

A: The process of victimization refers to the things that occur before the actual sexual abuse begins. So, it's a way of thinking about how children develop a relationship with the perpetrator, the types of things that perpetrators do to make the child feel, develop a relationship of power and control, and to acquaint children with sexuality or physical contact.

**1. Grooming to facilitate compliance**

Testimony addressing specific behaviors or the process of grooming.

No - 0

Yes - 1

E.g.: Q. Okay. Now, are you familiar with the term of "engagement"?

A Yes.

Q. What does engagement mean?

A. Engagement refers to how children report that if the perpetrator isn't a family member or if they're being abused by somebody outside their family, that quite often they had -- the perpetrator established a relationship with them before the abuse began. So children report that perpetrators will give them gifts, will offer them candy, will offer assistance to their parents or other family members, that they establish -- that the child felt like they could trust them because of the things that the perpetrator was doing.

Other children report that perpetrators kind of establish a relationship of control over them. For example, some children report that the perpetrator was physically or emotionally abusive to the child and intimidated them and made them feel helpless in that situation.

**2. Grooming to maintain secrecy**

Testimony addressing specific behaviors to maintain secrecy post-abuse.

No - 0

Yes - 1

E.g.: Q. Are there certain -- are there certain things that an abuser might do, either openly or more covertly, to buy a child's silence?

A. Yes. Many children report that the perpetrator said or did things to encourage them not to tell anybody. For example, children are told things like, this is our secret and, if you tell your mother, she'd be really angry with you, or, if you tell,

I'll go to jail and the family will fall apart and we'll get a divorce, or, if you tell, you know, no one was lieve you.

Other perpetrators may threaten the child with harm or other kinds of consequences if they tell. For example, they're told, if you tell, I'll hurt you, or I'll hurt your family, or I'll kill your pet, or they may threaten to harm the child.

### **3. Source of knowledge**

#### **3a. Experience**

The expert uses their personal experience to explain grooming and seduction behaviors.

No - 0

Yes - 1

E.g.: Q. I think you may have just answered this, but I'll ask it the way it's worded. Why would a child falsely accuse someone of sexual abuse, based on your past experience interviewing children?

A. Based on my past experience, the most common reasons I see are generally very young children whose parents are in heated custody disputes. Those are the cases that I see most often. And generally they're usually younger children, meaning that like under the age of eight.

#### **3b. Empirical Evidence**

The expert describes empirical evidence to explain grooming and seduction behaviors.

No - 0

Yes - 1

E.g.: Q. Does the child's age have any impact at all on whether or not a child tells right away?

A. Yes. We know from research that typically younger children, especially preschool age children, are less likely to tell right away.

#### **3c. Unclear**

It is unclear what the source of the expert's knowledge is.

No - 0

Yes - 1



APPENDIX H  
STUDY 4 CASE MATERIALS

## **CHARGES**

Count 15: James Riley, age 40, on or between August 11th, 2017, and July 29th, 2021, intentionally or knowingly molested Rachel Riley, a child under the age of fifteen years, by engaging in sexual contact with Rachel Riley, in violation of Arizona law.

The State has charged the Defendant with certain crimes. A charge is not evidence against the Defendant. You must not think the Defendant is guilty just because the Defendant has been charged with certain crimes. The Defendant has pled "not guilty." The Defendant's plea of "not guilty" means that the State must prove each part of each charge beyond a reasonable doubt.

## **DIRECT EXAMINATION OF THE WITNESS**

PROSECUTOR: Good afternoon, can you state your name please?

CHILD: Rachel Riley.

PROSECUTOR: How old are you?

CHILD: 8.

PROSECUTOR: Where do you go to school?

CHILD: I go to Arizona Central School.

PROSECUTOR: Who do you currently live with?

CHILD: I live with my mom and my older brother, Jake.

PROSECUTOR: Is there anyone else that lives with you?

CHILD: My dog lives with us too.

PROSECUTOR: Okay. Do you know who James Riley is?

CHILD: Yes.

PROSECUTOR: Who is he to you?

CHILD: He is my dad.

PROSECUTOR: Do you see your dad in the courtroom today?

CHILD: Yes, he's over there in the red shirt.

PROSECUTOR: May the record reflect the witness has identified the defendant.

---

**GROOMING NOT DESCRIBED CONDITION**

PROSECUTOR: And you've said before that your dad did some bad things, am I right?

CHILD: Yeah you're right, I told some people that.

PROSECUTOR: And when did all of these things start?

CHILD: They started when I was 5 years old I think.

PROSECUTOR: What grade were you in when these things started happening?

CHILD: I was in Miss McLear's class, she teaches kindergarten.

PROSECUTOR: Okay. And was it summer or winter, or something else?

CHILD: I don't know.

---

**GROOMING DESCRIBED CONDITION**

PROSECUTOR: Now I want you tell me a bit about your dad before everything started happening. Did your dad ever buy you presents?

CHILD: Yes, he would buy me lots of toys like my favorite bike and he bought me a pretty necklace.

PROSECUTOR: And this necklace, he took you to the store and you picked it out yourself, right?

CHILD: Yes, it was a secret for just me and him. He did lots of nice things for me.

PROSECUTOR: Okay. Now when you lived with him, did your dad treat you differently than he treated Jake?

CHILD: Yeah, I was his favorite. He would always buy me more stuff and he would take me on special trips just me and him.

PROSECUTOR: What did you do on your special trips?

CHILD: One time he took me to Disney World just me and him and we did lots of fun things and he bought me an Ariel doll and an Ariel purse because she is my favorite princess.

---

PROSECUTOR: Okay, Rachel. Now I want to take you back to the first time something happened with you and your dad. What happened?

CHILD: I was lying in bed and my dad walked in and he turned around and closed the door and he got under the covers and then he started touching me in my private spot.

PROSECUTOR: Let me stop you right there. How old were you when this happened?

CHILD: I was 5.

PROSECUTOR: Okay, you said a couple of things and were going to go through each one. You said you were lying in bed?

CHILD: Yeah.

PROSECUTOR: So you were in your room?

CHILD: Yeah.

PROSECUTOR: Who else sleeps in your room?

CHILD: Jake sleeps in my room too, we share. But he was downstairs watching TV.

PROSECUTOR: Okay, and who else was home?

CHILD: No one, mom was at work. She works in the evening so she's not home much when we go to bed.

PROSECUTOR: Okay. And what were you wearing when this happened?

CHILD: I was wearing pajama shorts and a tank top I think.

PROSECUTOR: Okay. Now you said he touched your private spot. What do you use that for?

CHILD: To pee.

PROSECUTOR: Did he touch you under your clothes or over your clothes?

CHILD: Under.

PROSECUTOR: And what did he touch you with?

CHILD: He used his fingers on his hand.

PROSECUTOR: How did his fingers move?

CHILD: It moved like scratches.

PROSECUTOR: Okay. What happened after that?

CHILD: After that I heard mom's car pulling into the driveway and he stopped and got up and left.

PROSECUTOR: Did this ever happen again?

CHILD: Yeah, it happened lots of times.

PROSECUTOR: Okay. What happened the very last time?

CHILD: The last time I was downstairs watching TV and my dad came, and he sat on the couch next to me and he put his hands under the blanket. And it was like the last time because he started scratching my private spot but then it was different because he put his

fingers all the way inside. Then he stopped, and I kept watching Spongebob.

PROSECUTOR: Okay let's talk about the time you were watching TV. Was anyone else home?

CHILD: No mom was at work and Jake was at a sleepover, so it was just me and dad at home.

PROSECUTOR: So when you were watching TV what were you wearing?

CHILD: I had on a pink dress like that has all the Disney princesses on it.

PROSECUTOR: And you said he put his fingers inside. What part did he put his fingers inside?

CHILD: The front part.

PROSECUTOR: And how did it feel?

CHILD: Yeah I didn't like it.

PROSECUTOR: And do you remember what time this was?

CHILD: I don't know, it was dark outside. It was nighttime.

PROSECUTOR: And how often would you say these things happened?

CHILD: I don't know, lots of the time.

PROSECUTOR: How many is lots of times? Is it more than 10?

CHILD: Yeah, more than 10.

PROSECUTOR: Can you count to 100?

CHILD: No, I Can count to 50.

PROSECUTOR: Was it more than 50?

CHILD: No not more than 50.

PROSECUTOR: Okay. Did you tell anyone about this?

CHILD: I told my mom after the last time.

PROSECUTOR: And what did your mom do when you told her?

CHILD: She started crying and she gave me a hug. Then she called the police.

PROSECUTOR: Okay. And what happened after she called the police?

CHILD: They came to my house and asked me lots of questions. Then my mom took me to the hospital and we talked to a nurse there who said she was there to check I was okay.

PROSECUTOR: Okay. Thanks Rachel.

## **CROSS EXAMINATION OF THE WITNESS**

DEFENSE: Hi Rachel, my name is Bianca Moore. I am going to ask you some questions. Don't worry there won't be too many. First have we ever met before today?

CHILD: No.

DEFENSE: Right, we haven't. Now you said earlier, the first time this happened you were wearing pajama shorts?

CHILD: Yeah.

DEFENSE: Is it possible that you actually told Detective Ann that you were wearing pajama pants?

CHILD: I don't know.

DEFENSE: Is your memory better today, or was it better 1 year ago?

CHILD: Maybe a year ago.

DEFENSE: Okay, did these things happen a long time ago? Is it hard to remember?

CHILD: Yeah.

DEFENSE: Why is it hard to remember?

CHILD: Because it happened lots and sometimes I get mixed up.

DEFENSE: And you said it was nighttime when these things happened?

CHILD: Yeah, a lot of times.

DEFENSE: Was there any light in the room?

CHILD: Yeah, a little bit.

DEFENSE: So, could you actually see what was happening all the time?

CHILD: Not all the times, but sometimes it was daytime.

DEFENSE: Okay, all right. Now, when you were talking to Detective Ann you said he put his fingers "on" your private and now your saying "in" your private. So which one was it? CHILD: It was on the first time and in the last time and lots of times in the middle.

DEFENSE: Who taught you that was your private spot?

CHILD: My mom taught me that word.

DEFENSE: Did she teach you anything else?

CHILD: Just that's what it's called and its private.

DEFENSE: Okay Rachel, now you said there was another time where he put his fingers inside your private part?

CHILD: Yep.

DEFENSE: And how did it feel?

CHILD: Not good.

DEFENSE: Is it possible you told Detective Ann that is actually tickled?

CHILD: No.

DEFENSE: So, if that's what she wrote down in her police report would that be a lie?

CHILD: I don't know.

DEFENSE: So which version is true, the one you told Detective Ann or the one you're telling us today?

CHILD: Today.

DEFENSE: Interesting and has your story changed since then?

CHILD: I don't know.

DEFENSE: Okay and when you talked to Detective Ann was anyone else there?

CHILD: Yeah, my mom and Jake were there.

DEFENSE: Did they hear what you were saying?

CHILD: Yes.

DEFENSE: Did they say anything to you?

CHILD: No.

DEFENSE: What did your mom say about talking to Detective Ann?

CHILD: She said to tell her all the bad things my Dad did.

DEFENSE: Okay. And Rachel, you also said you didn't tell anyone for a long time?

CHILD: Yeah.

DEFENSE: Doesn't your dad work during the day?

CHILD: Yes he drives trucks.

DEFENSE: So you have plenty of time when it's just you and your mom?

CHILD: And Jake.

DEFENSE: Okay you and your mom and Jake?

CHILD: Yeah.

DEFENSE: So, you could have told her a long time ago?

CHILD: Yeah.

DEFENSE: But you didn't?

CHILD: Okay.

DEFENSE: Okay, and you love your brother, Jake?

CHILD: Yes.

DEFENSE: Do you look up to Jake?

CHILD: Yeah.

DEFENSE: Are you guys very close?

CHILD: Yes.

DEFENSE: Does Jake sometimes tell you to lie?

CHILD: Yes.

DEFENSE: And do you do what Jake tells you to do?

CHILD: Sometimes yeah.

DEFENSE: You always tell the truth?

CHILD: Not every time.

DEFENSE: Are you telling the truth today?

CHILD: Yes, I am.

DEFENSE: Did you ever tell someone that you don't tell the truth all the time?

CHILD: Yes.

DEFENSE: You've said that before?

CHILD: Yes.

DEFENSE: So not everything you've said is true is it?

CHILD: Yes it is.

DEFENSE: Did Jake tell you to say those things about your dad?

CHILD: We talked about it and he helped me remember it all.

DEFENSE: Thank you, Rachel, that's all I have.

THE COURT: Thank you, counsel.

And, prosecution, would you please like to call your first witness.

MRS. WEST: The State will call Alison Miller.



Having been first duly sworn by the Clerk of the Court, was examined and testified as follows:

**EXPERT TESTIMONY DIRECT EXAMINATION**

PROSECUTOR: State your name for the record?

WITNESS: My name is Alison Miller.

PROSECUTOR: How are you employed?

WITNESS: I work at the North Central Child Advocacy Center here in Arizona.

PROSECUTOR: And what do you do there?

WITNESS: I am a forensic interviewer.

PROSECUTOR: What exactly is a forensic interview?

WITNESS: It is a fact-finding interview where I work with kids to elicit a narrative of what may have happened to them. I approach the interview from a neutral perspective and let the child tell me what they have seen or have experienced themselves.

PROSECUTOR: What about your education, tell me about that?

WITNESS: I have a Bachelor's of Science degree in psychology and a Doctorate in family counseling.

PROSECUTOR: And do you keep up to date on the current literature in the field?

WITNESS: Yes, I am subscribed to numerous journals and have taken over 1200 hours of continued education credits in my field.

PROSECUTOR: And how many forensic interviews do you estimate you have done?

WITNESS: I would guess somewhere around 5000.

PROSECUTOR: Now on to this specific case. Do you know anything at all about the details of this specific case?

WITNESS: No.

PROSECUTOR: Have you done the interviews or read the transcripts before today?

WITNESS: No.

PROSECUTOR: Have you been told any specific facts of the case?

WITNESS: No.

PROSECUTOR: And what exactly are you here to do then?

WITNESS: I am here to provide information based on research about child victimization, to help jurors make decisions in this case.

PROSECUTOR: And what does the research say about how children react to sexual

abuse?

WITNESS: Children tend to react in one of three ways when confronted with any traumatic situation, either by fighting, by running away, or freezing. And sexual abuse may present a specific obstacle for children because typically they are unable to fight back or may not be able to feel free to run away, and instead they may freeze and actually learn how to live with the perpetrator's behavior.

---

#### **GROOMING NOT DESCRIBED CONDITION**

PROSECUTOR: And when a child has been a victim of sexual abuse, what are some different ways they might cope?

WITNESS: There are many different ways that children cope and react. They might pretend they're asleep. They might experience out-of-body feelings like they're up on the ceiling floating watching it happen almost as though it's not real. Other children might pretend or fantasize about being rescued by a superhero. Other children might focus on the physical sensations that are occurring.

PROSECUTOR: Are there any other ways a child might cope, like avoidance?

WITNESS: Children might try to get out of the home so joining clubs and doing activities that keep them busy and away from the perpetrator. They might try sleeping over at a friend's house to avoid the perpetrator if the abuse happens a lot at night.

PROSECUTOR: Could children use drugs or alcohol to cope?

WITNESS: Definitely, especially as kids get older it's more and more common for them to use drugs and alcohol as an outlet. For example, a teenage girl may resort to coping through alcohol use to help distract her from negative emotions she may be feeling surrounding the abuse much in the same way as some adults use alcohol to cope as well.

PROSECUTOR: And is this in fact research you have conducted yourself?

WITNESS: Yes I have. I published a paper several years ago where I conducted interviews with about 50 teenagers who had made allegations of abuse and asked them about their coping mechanisms. Alcohol and drug use came up in about 40% of all the cases I examined.

---

#### **GROOMING DESCRIBED CONDITION**

PROSECUTOR: Now can you tell us, based on your experience and training and the current research, why a child would delay disclosure?

WITNESS: There are numerous reasons why a child would not disclose abuse right away. First the child may have been groomed and seduced into secrecy. That is, many children have a relationship with their perpetrator that can make it difficult for them to tell. They might give the child gifts or take them on special outings or tell the child how smart and nice they are, or tell the child that they love and care about them.

PROSECUTOR: What is grooming?

WITNESS: Grooming refers to how perpetrators acquaint children with increasingly intrusive touching or sexuality. Many children report that their perpetrators engaged in physical conduct with them that they enjoyed; things like wrestling games, tickling games, lap sitting, perhaps exchanging back rubs and tucking them into bed at night, cuddling and those kinds of things. And for the child this can make them feel very special and cared for and wanted. And for the perpetrator it may be very sexually arousing to engage in behaviors like this.

PROSECUTOR: What does that mean about how a child feels about the perpetrator?

WITNESS: For children who have been groomed, it can be really confusing for them and they can feel very ambivalent or even love and like the perpetrator. It could mean that a child may take much longer to tell someone about the abuse because of the close relationship they have with the perpetrator.

PROSECUTOR: In addition to grooming, what other tactics do perpetrators use to keep a victim quiet?

WITNESS: They might use more overt power and control methods, which might make the child fear the perpetrator. And if you have a perpetrator who uses a combination of both grooming and secrecy maintenance strategies, it can be very difficult for the child to tell someone. Other perpetrators may tell the child “I’m doing this because I love you” or “I’m doing this to teach you about the birds and the bees.” It can be confusing for very young children.

PROSECUTOR: Now are you familiar with situations where the victim has been abused with others present or others nearby?

WITNESS: Yes.

---

PROSECUTOR: What will that tell us about the victim?

WITNESS: It could mean that the child thinks other people know and don’t care, or they may not even recognize the abusive behavior as abusive if others are present when it happens.

PROSECUTOR: Finally, what does the research tell us about the effects of sexual abuse on children?

WITNESS: Well, the research suggests that there are many factors that play into whether or not a child may be traumatized. But the factors that seem to be most closely related to children exhibiting trauma are the closeness in the relationship between the perpetrator and the offender and the duration of the abuse.

### **EXPERT TESTIMONY CROSS EXAMINATION**

DEFENSE: So, Miss Miller, you mentioned that you work for North Central Child Advocacy Center?

WITNESS: Yes.

DEFENSE: And that is a state agency?

WITNESS: It is a city agency.

DEFENSE: So, you don't work directly for the state?

WITNESS: No, I work for a child advocacy center that works closely with local law enforcement.

DEFENSE: So, you work hand in hand with law enforcement?

WITNESS: Yes.

DEFENSE: Every day would you say?

WITNESS: Most days, yes.

DEFENSE: And you mentioned you're not a doctor?

WITNESS: I have my doctorate in counseling, but I am not a psychologist if that's what you mean.

DEFENSE: And what can a doctor do that you cannot?

WITNESS: A doctor can make diagnoses and I cannot.

DEFENSE: And you're not here today to do any kind of diagnosis correct?

WITNESS: Yes.

DEFENSE: You cannot definitely say for sure if abuse has occurred?

WITNESS: No, I'm here to present the research and my own experiences over 20 years as an interviewer.

DEFENSE: How many times have you testified in court as an expert witness?

WITNESS: Over 200 times.

DEFENSE: How many times have you testified for the defense out of those 200 times?

WITNESS: Probably less than 10.

DEFENSE: Interesting. And you've told us already you have no idea about the facts of this case?

WITNESS: Yes, that's correct.

DEFENSE: And you're not getting paid anything extra to be here today?

WITNESS: No, I make my usual salary whether I'm working at the center or here testifying in court.

DEFENSE: So, part of your job requirements are coming here to testify, it's fair to say?

WITNESS: Yes, it's part of my job description.

DEFENSE: Now have you heard of the term false reporting before?

WITNESS: Yes.

DEFENSE: What is that?

WITNESS: It's when a child makes an intentionally false allegation of abuse.

DEFENSE: And what are the reasons they would do that?

WITNESS: Well, when false allegations occur, they tend to involve younger children whose parents are involved in a high conflict divorce or custody dispute. And most of the time the allegations originate from one of the adults. In that situation the child may be coached or encouraged to make the false allegation.

DEFENSE: And children can make mistakes, right?

WITNESS: Yes.

DEFENSE: Now these mistakes can be related to salient, central details, right?

WITNESS: I suppose so.

DEFENSE: Thank you. I have no further questions.

### **EXPERT TESTIMONY REDIRECT EXAMINATION**

PROSECUTOR: Just to clarify, you are not employed by the state?

WITNESS: Correct.

PROSECUTOR: You work for a child advocacy center?

WITNESS: Yes.

PROSECUTOR: You do not make any extra money for testifying here today?

WITNESS: No.

PROSECUTOR: And you said false disclosures do happen?

WITNESS: Yes.

PROSECUTOR: And how do false disclosures relate to a delayed disclosure?

WITNESS: The two are not related. I have seen children make false allegations about abuse that was very recent or abuse that happened a long time ago.

PROSECUTOR: I have no further questions.

THE COURT: Thank you.

APPENDIX I

STUDY 4 MEASURES

How serious are the charges against the defendant? 1- not at all serious – 7 – very serious

Do you find the defendant GUILTY or NOT GUILTY of child sexual abuse?

Guilty or Not Guilty

How confident are you in your verdict that you selected for CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE?  
(In other words, how sure are you that your verdict judgement was the correct one in this case)

Sliding scale: Response range 0- not at all confident, 100 – completely confident

Credibility Questionnaire:

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>
Not at all					Very	Prefer not to answer

How **intelligent** do you think the child was?

How **accurately** do you think the child recalled the events?

How **believable** was the child?

How well did the child **understand** the events described?

How **truthful** was the child?

How **consistent** was the child?

How **honest** do you think the child was?

How likely is it the child **fabricated** (i.e., made up) the event?

Overall how **credible** was the child?

Overall how **suggestible** was the child?

Disclosure of Abuse Category questions from Quas and colleagues Belief Questionnaire (2005)

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree	Prefer not to answer

1. When a child's description of sexual abuse is disclosed over time, with more details being reported each time the child is interviewed, this clearly indicates that the child's description is false
2. Inconsistencies in a child's report of sexual abuse indicate that the report is false
3. Most children who are sexually abused tell someone right away
4. Children who retract (take back) their stories about sexual abuse were probably lying in the first place
5. Children who have been sexually abused will not deny it if asked by a trusted adult
6. Children sometimes make up false claims of sexual abuse to get back at an adult

7. When a child's description of sexual abuse is disclosed over time, with more details being reported each time the child is interviewed, this indicates that the child's description is true.

#### Additional Questions about Grooming

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>
Strongly disagree	Moderately disagree	Slightly disagree	Slightly agree	Moderately agree	Strongly agree	Prefer not to answer

1. Children can be groomed or seduced into sexual abuse.
3. A child might delay disclosure of child sexual abuse if they have been groomed.
4. A child might take back an allegation of sexual abuse if they have been groomed.
5. Grooming is a common tactic used by perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

#### Demographics:

1. How old are you? Under 18, 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+
2. How do you describe yourself? Male, Female, Non-binary, prefer to self-describe, prefer not to say
3. What is your race/ethnicity? African American/Black, Hispanic/ Latino, Asian/ Asian American, Caucasian/White, Native American, Other
4. What is your political orientation: Very conservative, Conservative, Somewhat conservative, Neither Conservative nor Liberal, Somewhat Liberal, Liberal, Very Liberal
5. What is your highest level of education? Less than high school, high school graduate, some college, 2 year degree, 4 year degree, Master's degree, doctorate or doctorate level professional degree (MD, JD, etc.)
6. Do you have children of? Yes, No
7. Do you have any experience with children: Not at all, Somewhat, A lot



APPENDIX J  
IRB FORM STUDY 4



EXEMPTION GRANTED

[Stacia Roosevelt](#)  
[WATTS: Criminology and Criminal Justice, School of](#)  
602/496-0495  
Stacia.Stolzenberg@asu.edu

Dear [Stacia Roosevelt](#):

On 11/15/2021 the ASU IRB reviewed the following protocol:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title:	Understanding Children’s Reports of Grooming in Child Sexual Abuse Cases - Jury Decision Making Analysis
Investigator:	<a href="#">Stacia Roosevelt</a>
IRB ID:	STUDY00014957
Funding:	Name: National Science Foundation
Grant Title:	
Grant ID:	
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consent form, Category: Consent Form;</li><li>• Jury Protocol, Category: IRB Protocol;</li><li>• materials, Category: Measures (Survey questions/Interview questions /interview guides/focus group questions);</li><li>• NSF dissertaiton grant.docx, Category: Sponsor Attachment;</li><li>• Recruitment add.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials;</li></ul>

The IRB determined that the protocol is considered exempt pursuant to Federal Regulations 45CFR46 (2) Tests, surveys, interviews, or observation on 11/15/2021.

In conducting this protocol you are required to follow the requirements listed in the INVESTIGATOR MANUAL (HRP-103).