

# Critical Issues In Child Sexual Abuse: Historical, Legal, And Psychological Perspectives

Psychology, Public Policy, and Law  
2009, Vol. 15, No. 2, 102–123

© 2009 American Psychological Association  
1076-8971/09/\$12.00 DOI: 10.1037/a0015339

## JUDGING THE CREDIBILITY OF HISTORIC CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE COMPLAINANTS How Judges Describe Their Decisions

Deborah A. Connolly  
Simon Fraser University

Heather L. Price  
University of Regina

Heidi M. Gordon  
Simon Fraser University

Criminal prosecutions of child sexual abuse alleged to have occurred in the distant past raise myriad challenges. One significant challenge involves assessing the credibility of complainants. In the present study, 51 bench trials involving 87 complainants were coded into categories related to complainants' memory for the offense, as well as credibility of the complainant, reliability of the evidence, and judicial inferences. A total of 4,827 judicial comments were identified and categorized. Judges were more likely to describe the allegations specifically than generally; however, they were sensitive to the predictably impoverished nature of memory after such a long delay. Consistent with psychological evidence, there were more judicial comments about inconsistencies in acquit cases than in convict cases and more comments about corroboration in convict than in acquit cases, although neither inconsistencies nor corroboration were strongly associated with verdict. Of some concern was the apparent and considerable judicial interest in complainants' behavior and emotions around the time of the alleged abuse and around the time of disclosure.

**Keywords:** historic child sexual abuse complaints, recent complaint warning, credibility assessment

"Historically, immediate complaint was a requirement before a sexual assault or abuse prosecution could succeed" (Lewis, 2006, p. 93). This rule probably dates back to 13th-century common law, where failure to make a timely complaint was a full defense to rape (Cossins, 2002). The rule evolved such that, by the 18th century, the trier of fact was expected to draw an adverse inference with respect to credibility if a timely complaint was not made to an official or layperson (Gobbo, 1970, as cited in Cossins, 2002). Accordingly, evidence of earlier complaints, ordinarily inadmissible as hearsay or as previous consistent statements, was admitted if the earlier complaint was made at the first reasonable opportunity after the offense was committed (Lewis, 2006). For at least two reasons this was a particularly oppressive doctrine for child victims of sexual assault. First, most victims of child sexual abuse (CSA) do not report their victimization immediately. In fact, it has been estimated that approximately two-thirds of

Deborah A. Connolly and Heidi M. Gordon, Department of Psychology, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada; Heather L. Price, Department of Psychology, University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

This research was supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) operating grant to Deborah A. Connolly, a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council graduate scholarship to Heather L. Price, and a SSHRC graduate scholarship to Heidi M. Gordon. We thank Jocelyn Conway for her invaluable assistance with data coding.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Deborah A. Connolly, Department of Psychology, Simon Fraser University, 8888 University Drive, Burnaby, British Columbia, V5A 1S6 Canada. E-mail: debc@sfu.ca

102

Critical Issues in Child Sexual Abuse: Historical, Legal, and Psychological Perspectives: Medicine & Health Science Books @ Amazon. com. Critical Issues in Child Sexual Abuse: Historical, Legal, and Psychological Perspectives by Jon R Conte () [Jon R Conte] on malizair-ulm.com \* FREE\*. Critical Issues in Child Sexual Abuse: Historical, Legal, and Psychological Perspectives. Article in Archives of Sexual Behavior 34(5) Share to: Critical issues in child sexual abuse: historical, legal, and psychological perspectives / editor. View the summary of this work. Bookmark. If you are looking for a ebook Critical Issues in Child Sexual Abuse: Historical, Legal, and Psychological Perspectives by Jon R. Conte in pdf form, then you. Critical issues in child sexual abuse: historical, legal, and psychological and the public have come to understand child sexual abuse today"--Back cover. Ebook Critical Issues In Child Sexual Abuse Historical Legal And Psychological. Perspectives currently available at malizair-ulm.com for review. Booktopia has Critical Issues in Child Sexual Abuse, Historical, Legal, and Psychological Perspectives by Jon R. Conte. Buy a discounted Paperback of Critical. Critical Issues in Child Sexual Abuse: Historical, Legal, and Psychological Perspectives by Jon R. Conte. \$ Edition - 1st. Publication: January 15, Also the price of an e-book Critical Issues in Child Sexual Abuse Historical Legal and Psychological. Perspectives is so budget-friendly; numerous people are. Critical Issues In Child Sexual Abuse Historical Legal And Psychological Perspectives 1st Edition - In this site is not the same as a answer encyclopedia you buy. Critical issues in child sexual abuse: historical, legal, and psychological Prosecution of child sexual abuse in the United States / John E.B. Myers [et al.]. Critical issues in child sexual abuse: historical, legal, and psychological When paradigms collide: Roland Summit and the rediscovery of child sexual abuse. Critical issues in child sexual abuse: Historical, legal, and psychological perspectives. Printer-friendly version PDF version. Author: Conte, Jon R. Shelve Mark.

[\[PDF\] Lippincotts Nursing Procedures](#)

[\[PDF\] JPL And The American Space Program: A History Of The Jet Propulsion Laboratory](#)

[\[PDF\] Diane Goodes Book Of Silly Stories & Songs](#)

[\[PDF\] Forest Management: To Sustain Ecological, Economic, And Social Values](#)

[\[PDF\] Antitrust Compliance Manual: A Guide For Counsel And Executives Of Businesses And Professions](#)

[\[PDF\] H.R. 974, The District Of Columbia College Access Act And S. 856, The Expanded Options In Higher Edu](#)

[\[PDF\] Understanding CAD/CAM](#)