



Lindsay Clancy Trial: A Lesson in Narrowing the Scope for Jurors

By Lindsay Bouchard, Jury Consultant

Like many people, I followed the recent Lindsay Clancy trial and the jurors' post-trial interviews. Many of these interviews are on platforms like YouTube that allow user comments, and their fervor particularly surprised me. Consistently, commenters who disagreed with most of the jury focused on the lives and deaths of Clancy's children. They felt strongly that the children deserve justice and that the prosecution should bring it.

Across interviews, however, jurors repeatedly said that justice for the children was "not what we were here to decide."¹ Even the lone holdout juror said he could not agree to acquit Clancy because he felt too strongly that the children deserved justice.² This tension between what justice looks like and what a jury is tasked with deciding is a concern attorneys deal with every day, especially in emotionally charged cases.

When Jurors Want to Answer a Bigger Question

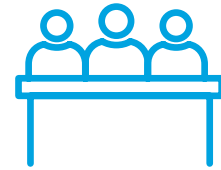
I have seen during mock trials that jurors often want to view the case as a whole and decide what is "right" and what is "wrong." Many do not learn what they are there to decide until the jury instructions at the end of the process. Those instructions ask specific questions that look at the case through a very narrow lens. For some jurors, this is upsetting because they want to answer a different question or view the case more broadly.

Why the Lens Should Be Set Early

Attorneys need to narrow the scope of the case early on and return to it periodically. Once jurors know the questions they will answer, they can weigh the evidence through that lens. They are more attuned when opposing counsel brings up information or testimony outside the case's narrow scope.

This approach also helps counsel build trust and rapport with jurors by working with them, giving a preview of what is to come without insulting their intelligence. Additionally, if counsel avoids dense legalese and explains the jury questions and instructions in clear, thoughtful layman's terms, jurors and judges alike will appreciate the authenticity and respect for their time.

Counsel should begin in voir dire by gauging whether jurors can view a case through the lens of the jury questions rather than the larger issue of right and wrong. One strategy is to ask jurors what justice means to them and whether they can separate their definition of justice from what the law requires.



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How to Focus Jurors on the Questions That Matter

Many lessons can be gleaned from the Lindsay Clancy trial (and its possible retrial), but understanding how to narrow jurors' focus is a tangible first step that all litigators can use to improve trial communication—and outcomes. When attorneys clearly define the questions that jurors are being asked to answer, they help prevent broader emotional considerations from overshadowing the legal issues at hand. Repeatedly returning to that framework throughout the case can help jurors stay grounded in the evidence, apply the law as instructed, and reach decisions based on the specific questions before them rather than their personal views of what justice requires.

IMS jury consultants help attorneys identify how jurors interpret case themes, evidence, and jury instructions long before trial. Through mock trials and focus groups, jury profiling for jury selection, and trial strategy consulting, we enable counsel to understand where jurors may broaden the scope and develop approaches to keep attention on the legally relevant questions. The result is a clearer, more focused presentation that helps jurors evaluate the evidence through the intended lens.

Contact us today to discuss how IMS can support your next case.

References

¹ NBC10 Boston. "Lindsay Clancy Jurors Speak: Watch the Extended Interview." YouTube video, September 9, 2026. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdxTKM7wHIM>.

² NBC 10 WJAR. "Full Interview: Juror Speaks in Depth about Lindsay Clancy Murder Trial." YouTube video, September 17, 2026. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bRIaK4XU-j8>.

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