**Konovalov, Hailey (PS2A)**

**Children’s Narrative Coherence in “Achieving Best Evidence” Forensic Interviews and Courtroom Testimony**

In the United Kingdom, Section 27 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act permits “Achieving Best Evidence” (ABE) forensic interviews to replace the evidence-in-chief in cases involving child victims. Research shows that the use of ABE interviews as the evidence-in-chief has nearly replaced the prosecutors’ courtroom examinations, emphasizing the importance of coherent forensic interviews, as it not only affects the likelihood of proceeding to trial but will also affect jurors’ guilt determination (Henderson et al., 2018).

It is therefore imperative that forensic interviewers elicit complete, reliable, and coherent narratives from children. The goal of the research study is to determine the coherence of forensic interviews conducted and whether interviewer support increased the coherence of these interviews. The current study adapted two coherence measures (story grammar elements and the Narrative Coherence Coding Scheme; Reese et al., 2011; Feltis et al., 2010) to examine the coherence of children’s ABE interviews (and their subsequent direct-examinations), as well as the effect of interviewers’ supportive strategies on children’s coherence. Researchers are currently coding transcripts for 84 alleged child victims who were interviewed between 2012-2016 in the United Kingdom. All children were video-recorded in their ABE interview, and the recording was played as their evidence-in-chief in the subsequent trial.

Because the legal system places significant emphasis on the coherence of children’s narratives, and because child victims are at particular risk of providing incoherent narratives, it is crucial to explore both the quality of these forensic interviews as well as supportive strategies that interviewers may employ to elicit more coherent accounts.

Keywords: narrative coherence, forensic interview, interviewer support, evidence

Hailey Konovalov, University of Southern California

Faith VanMeter, University of Minnesota

Hayden Henderson, University of Southern California

Dr. Uri Blasbalg, University of Cambridge

Dr. Yael Karni-Visel, University of Haifa