

Forensic Interviewing of Children with Disabilities

A Bibliography



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Scope

This bibliography provides citations and abstracts to articles, book chapters, and reports covering issues involving forensic interviewing of children with disabilities. This bibliography is not comprehensive.

Organization

Publications are listed in date descending order within each of the categories listed below.

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Forensic Interviewing of Children with Disabilities

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Intellectual Disabilities

Johnstone, K. L., Blades, M., & Martin, C. (2023). [Making memories: Examining the gestural misinformation effect in children aged 11-16-years-old with intellectual/developmental difficulties](https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/bgx7y). DOI:10.31234/osf.io/bgx7y

Children with diagnosed intellectual/developmental difficulties (IDD) are over-represented within the criminal justice system and at an increased risk of maltreatment. In a police or other forensic interview setting, it has been shown that witness testimony by typically developing children may be compromised or corrupted by misleading non-verbal gestures, however there has been no research to investigate this in children with IDD. The main aim of this study was therefore to understand whether gestural information can mislead children with IDD, and the relationship of any effects to key variables such as chronological age, gesture saliency, and question centrality. Results showed that misleading gestures were able to corrupt recall of a past event in children with moderate IDD between the ages of 11 and 16. The saliency of a gesture significantly affected the ability of that question to mislead, however the centrality of a question did not affect the ability of a question to mislead. These findings may have important implications for police interview guidelines involving children with moderate IDD.

Åker, T. H., & Johnson, M. S. (2020). [Interviewing alleged victims with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities and autism: A field study of police-investigated cases of physical and sexual abuse in a Norwegian national sample](https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12771). *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 64(10), 782-792. DOI:10.1111/jir.12771

People with intellectual disabilities (IDs) or autism are at great risk of being victims of physical and sexual abuse. This study uses transcriptions of real-life investigative interviews to examine the interview techniques (e.g. question type) used in investigative interviews of these groups of alleged victims. A national sample of transcribed investigative interviews (N = 96) of alleged victims with mild ID (n = 48, age 5–70 years old), moderate ID (n = 18, age 14–43 years old) and autism (n = 16, age 5–50 years old) was analysed. The study shows a preponderance of alleged sexual offences (70.7%) and reveals that open-ended questions account for only 2.6% of the total

number of questions asked. The interviewers relied heavily on yes/no (53.4%) and directive questions (32.2%). Suggestive questions (8.6%) were frequently used. The use of question type varied considerably within and across the diagnostic group. The study reveals the need for a more in-depth analysis of variables that influence investigative interviews of people with cognitive impairments.

Brown, D. A., Lewis, C. N., Lamb, M. E., Gwynne, J., Kitto, O., & Stairmand, M. (2019). [Developmental differences in children's learning and use of forensic ground rules during an interview about an experienced event](#). *Developmental Psychology*, 55(8), 1626-1639. DOI:10.1037/dev0000756

Children often answer questions when they do not have the requisite knowledge or when they do not understand them. We examined whether ground rules instruction—to say “I don’t know,” to tell the truth, and to correct the interviewer when necessary—assisted children in applying those rules during an interview about a past event and whether doing so was associated with more accurate accounts. We compared children with intellectual disabilities (mild or moderate severity, n = 44, 7–12 years) with 3 groups of typically developing children (2 matched for mental age, and 1 for chronological age, n = 55, 4–12 years) on their understanding of 3 ground rules, their use of these rules in an interview, and their accuracy in recalling a personally experienced event. Many children were able to demonstrate proficiency with the rules following simple instruction but others required additional teaching. Children applied the rules sparingly in the interview. Their scores on the practice trials of each rule were unrelated to each other, and to the use of the rules in context. Their developmental level was significantly related to both of these skills. Regression models showed that developmental level was the best predictor of children’s accuracy when they recounted their experience during the interview but that use of responses consistent with the rules, in conjunction with developmental level, predicted accurate resistance to suggestive questions. Future research should identify how best to prepare children of different ages and cognitive abilities to answer adults’ questions appropriately.

Wyman, J. D., Lavoie, J., & Talwar, V. (2019). Best practices for interviewing children with intellectual disabilities in maltreatment cases. *Exceptionality*, 27(3), 167-184.
DOI:10.1080/09362835.2018.1425623

Globally, children with intellectual disabilities are at an increased risk of being victims of maltreatment compared to those without disabilities. Among the children who do disclose the abuse, limitations with communication and working memory can result in their allegation being perceived as not credible. There are several evidence-based interviewing methods available to interviewers for improving the accuracy and amount of detail in children's testimonies, such as free-recall and cognitive load questioning. In general, these interviewing methods have been developed and tested with typically developing populations, and do not take into consideration the needs of children with intellectual disabilities. Further, there is very little empirical work to guide forensic interviews with intellectually disabled populations, despite there being a great need for such strategies. To address this notable gap in the literature, the current article reviews the contemporary literature on forensic interviewing to identify the best methods for questioning children with intellectual disabilities in maltreatment cases. Adaptations to the commonly used forensic interviewing techniques, including verbal, nonverbal, and repeated questioning strategies, are proposed that address the unique developmental, social, and emotional needs of this population. Furthermore, a series of recommendations are provided to enhance the limited forensic interviewing research with this population.

Hershkowitz, I. (2018). NICHD-protocol investigations of individuals with intellectual disability: A descriptive analysis. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 24(3), 39–403.
DOI:10.1037/law0000170

The current study followed investigative interviews with individuals with mild and moderate intellectual disability (ID) and observed both the types of prompts addressed to them and the nature of their responses. The sample comprised 200 alleged victims, in 4 equal and matched groups: individuals with mild ID and their mental-age (MA) matches, and individuals with moderate ID and their MA matches. All alleged victims were interviewed by trained investigators who followed the protocol of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, known to promote developmentally sensitive interviews. A descriptive analysis revealed that individuals with ID were faced with a substantial number of prompts, with recall prompts dominating the interviews.

They replied to almost all prompts, addressed substantive issues following over 2/3 of the prompts, and provided new details following 1/3 of the prompts, but they tended to respond at lower rates than did their counterparts. The number of details was generally lower among individuals with ID. However, all but the moderate ID group produced more details following recall than recognition prompts. Performance varied according to the severity of ID, with the mild ID group outperforming the moderate ID group. The findings challenge the notion that individuals with ID cannot participate in criminal investigations or act as witnesses. The data suggest that when abuse is suspected, awareness of their weakness and strengths is likely to promote informed and effective interviewing, which may yield valuable forensic evidence. (PsycInfo Database Record © 2022 APA, all rights reserved)

Brown, D., Lewis, C., Stephens, E., & Lamb, M. (2017). [Interviewers' approaches to questioning vulnerable child witnesses: The influences of developmental level versus intellectual disability status](#). *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 22(2), 332-349.
DOI:10.1111/lcrp.12104

Children with intellectual disabilities (CWIDs) are vulnerable to victimization, but we know little about how to interview them about possible maltreatment. We examined whether interviewers used proportionally more direct and option-posing, and fewer open questions, with CWID than with typically developing (TD) children or with less mature children regardless of disability, taking into account the contribution of the amount of information conveyed by the child. One hundred and twelve children (4–12 years) participated in a staged event and were interviewed 1 week later using the NICHD Investigative Interview Protocol. We examined the proportions of different interview prompts posed to CWID of either mild (CWID-Mild) or moderate (CWID-Moderate) severity compared with typically developing children matched for chronological (CA) and mental (MA) age. Even when controlling for the amount that the child said, the overall number and relative proportions of each question type posed to each group varied. Interviewers asked more cued invitations and fewer direct questions of CA-matched children than younger TD participants or both CWID groups. Option-posing questions comprised a larger proportion of the interviews with both ID groups than with CA matches. The few suggestive questions were posed more to CWID-Moderate. Although research has shown that CWID and young TD children can provide reliable information in response to very open prompting, interviewers tend not to ask such questions.

Interviewing strategy was influenced by both developmental level and intellectual disability status, in conjunction with children's individual contributions to the interview, emphasizing the importance of interviewers' understanding the capacities and vulnerabilities of the children they interview from both a developmental and cognitive perspective.

Brown, D. A., Lewis, C. N., & Lamb, M. E. (2015). [Preserving the past: An early interview improves delayed event memory in children with intellectual disabilities](#). *Child Development*, 86(4), 1031-1047. DOI:10.1111/cdev.12364

The influence of an early interview on children's (N = 194) later recall of an experienced event was examined in children with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities (CWID; 7–12 years) and typically developing (TD) children matched for chronological (7–12 years) or mental (4–9 years) age. Children previously interviewed were more informative, more accurate, and less suggestible. CWID (mild) recalled as much information as TD mental age matches, and were as accurate as TD chronological age matches. CWID (moderate) recalled less than TD mental age matches but were as accurate. Interviewers should elicit CWID's recall as early as possible and consider developmental level and severity of impairments when evaluating eyewitness testimony.

Bowles, P. V., & Sharman, S. J. (2014). A review of the impact of different types of leading interview questions on child and adult witnesses with intellectual disabilities. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 21(2), 205-217. DOI:10.1080/13218719.2013.803276

Children and adults with intellectual disabilities have traditionally been considered poor witnesses because they are easily misled and produce less accurate information in interviews when compared with individuals without intellectual disabilities. However, witnesses' levels of accuracy depend on the types of questions that they are asked, such as whether they are open or closed and whether they contain misleading information. In the current systematic review, we examined the literature investigating the different types of misleading questions commonly used in interviews, and their influence on the memories of adults and children with and without an intellectual disability. Thirteen articles that met inclusion criteria were reviewed. It was found that, compared with other question types, open and closed questions that presumed certain information to be true elicited the greatest number of errors in children and adults with intellectual disabilities compared with other question types. These findings reinforce the notion that the onus is on interviewers – particularly

when interviewing vulnerable witnesses – to avoid leading questions that presume information that may not be true.

Gentle, M., Milne, R., Powell, M. B., & Sharman, S. J. (2013). Does the cognitive interview promote the coherence of narrative accounts in children with and without an intellectual disability?. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 60(1), 30-43. DOI:10.1080/1034912X.2013.757138

We examined whether the cognitive interview (CI) procedure enhanced the coherence of narrative accounts provided by children with and without intellectual disabilities (ID), matched on chronological age. Children watched a videotaped magic show; one day later, they were interviewed using the CI or a structured interview (SI). Children interviewed using the CI reported more correct details than those interviewed using the SI. Additionally, children interviewed using the CI reported more contextual background details, more logically ordered sequences, more temporal markers, and fewer inconsistencies in their stories than those interviewed using the SI. However, the CI did not increase the number of story grammar elements compared with the SI. Overall children interviewed with the CI told better stories than those interviewed with the SI. This finding provided further support for the effectiveness of the CI with vulnerable witnesses, particularly children with ID.

Milne, R., Sharman, S. J., Powell, M. B., & Mead, S. (2013). Assessing the effectiveness of the cognitive interview for children with severe intellectual disabilities. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, 60(1), 18-29. DOI:10.1080/1034912X.2013.757137

We examined whether the cognitive interview (CI) procedure increased event recall in children with severe intellectual disabilities (ID) compared with children with no ID. Forty-six children with and without ID watched a videotaped event; they were aged between eight and 11 years. The next day they were individually interviewed using the CI or a structured interview (SI). Interviews consisted of free recall and specific questions, some of which contained leading or misleading information. The leading and misleading questions determined children's susceptibility to information presented after the event. Overall, children without ID reported more correct information than children with ID. For all children, the CI led to more correct recall than the SI without increases in incorrect details or confabulations. Although the CI did not decrease children's susceptibility to the misleading questions compared with the SI, children without ID

disagreed with more of the misleading suggestions than children with ID. These results suggest that the CI may indeed be a valuable tool to elicit information from very vulnerable witnesses.

Brown, D. A., Lewis, C. N., Lamb, M. E., & Stephens, E. (2012). The influences of delay and severity of intellectual disability on event memory in children. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 80*(5), 829-841. DOI:10.1037/a0029388

The objective was to examine the ability of children with intellectual disabilities to give reliable accounts of personally experienced events, considering the effects of delay, severity of disability, and the types of interview prompt used. Method: In a between-subjects design, we compared children with intellectual disabilities (7–12 years) that fell in either the mild–borderline range (n = 46) or the moderate range (n = 35) and typically developing children matched for either chronological age (7–12 years; n = 60) or mental age (4–9 years; n = 65) with respect to memories of an interactive event about which they were interviewed after either a short (1-week) or long (6-month) delay. Children were interviewed using the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Investigative Interview Protocol (Lamb, Hershkowitz, Orbach, & Esplin, 2008) to elicit their recall of the event and were then asked a series of highly suggestive questions to allow both their reliability and suggestibility to be examined. Results: The children with mild intellectual disabilities were as able as their mental age matches, whereas children with more severe cognitive impairments were qualitatively different across the various competencies examined. However, even children with more severe impairments were highly accurate in this supportive interview context. Conclusions: The findings indicate that children with intellectual disabilities can be valuable informants when forensically interviewed and can provide clear guidance about the ways in which they should be interviewed. (PsycINFO Database Record © 2012 APA, all rights reserved).

Cederborg, A. C., Hultman, E., & La Rooy, D. (2012). [The quality of details when children and youths with intellectual disabilities are interviewed about their abuse experiences.](#) *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research, 14*(2), 113-125. DOI:10.1080/15017419.2010.541615

The question for this study was to further understand how children and youths with intellectual disabilities (IDs) provide central and peripheral details when interviewed about their abuse experiences. Through a quantitative method we examined police officers' first formal investigative

interviews with 32 children and youths with IDs. We analyzed the details they reported about abuse in relation to types of questions asked. The findings showed that few open-ended invitations were used and that a large number of option-posing questions were asked. The children and youths tended to agree with option-posing and suggestive statements but were nonetheless able to report important information about their abuse experiences without the ‘help’ from these potentially contaminating questions. The results of this study are limited because of the selective nature of the sample and that we did not have access to complete information about the participants specific diagnosis. Although it shows that police officers need to provide children and youths with IDs greater opportunities to report details using open-ended invitations. If they do not develop their responses when asked open-ended invitations they may be asked open directive questions to facilitate the elicitation of both central and peripheral information.

Cederborg, A. C., Danielsson, H., La Rooy, D., & Lamb, M. E. (2009). [Repetition of contaminating question types when children and youths with intellectual disabilities are interviewed.](#) *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 53(5), 440-449.
DOI:10.1111/j.1365-2788.2009.01160.x

The present study examined the effects of repeating questions in interviews investigating the possible sexual abuse of children and youths who had a variety of intellectual disabilities. We predicted that the repetition of option-posing and suggestive questions would lead the suspected victims to change their responses, making it difficult to understand what actually happened. Inconsistency can be a key factor when assessing the reliability of witnesses. Materials Case files and transcripts of investigative interviews with 33 children and youths who had a variety of intellectual disabilities were obtained from prosecutors in Sweden. The interviews involved 25 females and 9 males whose chronological ages were between 5.4 and 23.7 years when interviewed (M = 13.2 years). Results Six per cent of the questions were repeated at least once. The repetition of focused questions raised doubts about the reports because the interviewees changed their answers 40% of the time. Conclusions Regardless of the witnesses' abilities, it is important to obtain reports that are as accurate and complete as possible in investigative interviews. Because this was a field study, we did not know which responses were accurate, but repetitions of potentially contaminating questions frequently led the interviewees to contradict their earlier

answers. This means that the interviewers' behaviour diminished the usefulness of the witnesses' testimony.

Cederborg, A. C., & Lamb, M. (2008). Interviewing alleged victims with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 52(1), 49-58. DOI:10.1111/j.1365-2788.2007.00976.x

This article discusses how victims of crime are interviewed by police officers in Sweden, and how this may affect their ability to report information accurately. When the officers asked focused questions, not open-ended questions, they were more likely to receive in accurate information. The article suggests when interviewing victims with Intellectual disabilities, use open-ended questions and shorter sentences for the best results.

Cederborg, A. C., La Rooy, D., & Lamb, M. E. (2008). Repeated interviews with children who have intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 21(2), 103-113. DOI:10.1111/j.1468-3148.2007.00372.x

We predicted that repeated interviewing would improve the informativeness of children with intellectual disabilities who were questioned in criminal investigations. The chronological ages of the 19 children, involved in 20 cases, ranged between 4.7 and 18 years (M = 10.3 years) at the time of the first alleged abuse. The utterances used by interviewers to elicit information in both initial and later interviews were examined. We then assessed the substantive information provided in both interviews and compared information elicited using focused questions in the initial interview with responses about the same topic elicited using open questions in the second interview. The hypothesis was supported: over 80% of the information reported in the repeated interviews was about completely new topics or was new information elaborating upon previously discussed topics. However, because the interviewing techniques were so poor in both first and second interviews, information provided in the repeated interviews may have been contaminated irrespective of the children's capacities. When children with intellectual disabilities are given a second chance to provide information about their abuse, they can further develop the information that they report and even provide entirely new information about their experiences. When interviewers are not specially trained in how to interview children with intellectual disabilities, we cannot assume that repeated interviews provide reliable and accurate information, however.

Henry, L. A., & Gudjonsson, G. H. (2007). Individual and developmental differences in eyewitness recall and suggestibility in children with intellectual disabilities. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 21*(3), 361-381. DOI:10.1002/acp.1280

This study examined two key issues: (1) whether there were developmental improvements in eyewitness memory performance for children with intellectual disabilities (ID); and (2) whether standardised measures of cognitive ability and suggestibility would relate to eyewitness recall and suggestibility. Children with ID and age-matched controls (ages 8/9 and 12 years) watched a video of a crime and were asked a range of open-ended and specific questions about the event in a subsequent interview. Free recall increased between the two age levels for children with and without ID, but at a faster rate for those without ID. For other question types, differences in performance between children with and without ID were far more marked than age differences. Standardised measures of interrogative suggestibility (Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale, GSS), verbal IQ, non-verbal IQ, mental age and speed of information processing were related to eyewitness performance. In particular, higher eyewitness recall scores (free recall, non-leading specific questions) were related to higher scores on the standardised GSS free recall measure; and higher eyewitness suggestibility scores were related to higher scores on the standardised GSS suggestibility measures. Mental age was a better predictor of performance on a range of eyewitness memory question types than verbal or nonverbal IQ; and speed of information processing showed some relationships with eyewitness performance. Copyright © 2006 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Nathanson, R., Crank, J. N., Saywitz, K. J., & Ruegg, E. (2007). Enhancing the oral narratives of children with learning disabilities. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 23*(4), 315-331. DOI:10.1080/10573560701501610

Oral narration is a ubiquitous activity that is essential for academic success and social competency. Research into the oral narratives of children with learning disabilities (LD) indicates that these children verbally report significantly less information about past events than children without LD. The present study evaluated the effectiveness of narrative elaboration training (NET), an instructional program aimed at aiding in the organization and retrieval of information about a past event. A post-test-only control group design was utilized to evaluate treatment effects on learning-disabled children's completeness and accuracy of statements regarding the details about a past event. Thirty-nine 7- to 12-year-old children with LD participated in small groups in a staged event

(history lesson). Two weeks later, they were randomly assigned to participate in one of two treatment conditions before being interviewed about the history lesson: NET, the experimental condition; or motivating instructions, the control condition. Analysis showed that the narratives of students who were taught the narrative elaboration procedure contained significantly more information about the prior event than the narratives of the children in the control group. The implications of these results are discussed.

Anderson, J. & Heath R. T. (2006). Forensic interviews of children who have developmental disabilities. [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#). Update. *American Prosecutors Research Institute*, 19(1); 19(2).

Provides general information on interviewing strategies when investigating a case with a child with developmental disabilities. The first short summary (Part 1) emphasizes the importance of preparations before an interview including being sure all information is obtained, establishing child characteristics and who will be the lead interviewer, etc. Part 2 highlights some general guidelines during the forensic interview including developmental screening, dynamics of abuse with this particular population. Articles are very short, but provide good points to consider for this population of children.

Milne, R., & Bull, R. (2006). [Interviewing victims of crime, including children and people with intellectual disabilities](#). In M. R. Kebbell & G. M. Davies (Eds.), *Practical Psychology for Forensic Investigations and Prosecutions* (pp.7-24). Wiley.

Robinson, J., & Mcguire, J. (2006). Suggestibility and children with mild learning disabilities: The use of the cognitive interview. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 12(5), 537-556.
DOI:10.1080/10683160500337550

The aims of this paper were firstly to identify any differences in the level of suggestibility between 20 7_9-year-old children with mild learning disabilities and 20 children with average academic ability using the Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale 2 (GSS2) and, secondly, to note the impact of the cognitive interview on the response patterns of children with mild learning disabilities. On the GSS2, average academic ability children recalled significantly more correct details than children with mild learning disabilities. There was no significant difference between the two groups of children on distortions, fabrications, total confabulations or on any of the four measures of

suggestibility. In the second part of the study, 38 children with mild learning disabilities watched a filmed event and then were interviewed using either a standard or a modified version of the cognitive interview. Following this, all participants were asked specific questions, some of which incorporated misleading information. One week later each participant was re-questioned. This time critical questions were included about the truth of the presuppositions introduced in the initial interview session. It was found that the cognitive interview elicited significantly more correct and incorrect details than a standard interview with no significant difference in fabrications. Use of the cognitive interview did not significantly affect susceptibility to subsequent misleading suggestions.

Agnew, S. E., & Powell, M. B. (2004). The effect of intellectual disability on children's recall of an event across different questions types. *Law and Human Behavior*, 28(3), 273-294.
DOI:10.1023/B:LAHU.0000029139.38127.61

This research examined the performance of 80 children aged 9–12 years with either a mild and moderate intellectual disability when recalling an innocuous event that was staged in their school. The children actively participated in a 30-min magic show, which included 21 specific target items. The first interview (held 3 days after the magic show) provided false and true biasing information about these 21 items. The second interview (held the following day) was designed to elicit the children's recall of the target details using the least number of specific prompts possible. The children's performance was compared with that of 2 control groups; a group of mainstream children matched for mental age and a group of mainstream children matched for chronological age. Overall, this study showed that children with either a mild or moderate intellectual disability can provide accurate and highly specific event-related information. However, their recall is less complete and less clear in response to free-narrative prompts and less accurate in response to specific questions when compared to both the mainstream age-matched groups. The implications of the findings for legal professionals and researchers are discussed.

Aarons, N. M., Powell, M. B., & Browne, J. (2004). Police perceptions of interviews involving children with intellectual disabilities: A qualitative inquiry. *Policing and Society*, 14(3), 269-278. DOI:10.1080/1043946042000241848

This study employed a qualitative method to explore the experiences of 20 police officers when interviewing children with intellectual disabilities. Three main themes were interpreted as representing challenges to the officers when interviewing special-needs children: police organizational culture, participants' perceptions of these children as interviewees, and prior information. Participants in this inquiry mentioned poor organizational priority within the police force for child abuse cases and children with intellectual disabilities, as well as inadequate support for interviewing skills development and maintenance. Participants also attempted to equalize these children by interviewing them in the same way as their mainstream peers. Finally, participants viewed interview preparation as influential in determining an interview's successful outcome, but recognized that preparedness could bias their interviewing techniques. Increased attention towards these issues will provide a basis for developing strategies to minimize such challenges and thus improve the quality of interviews with children with intellectual disabilities.

Henry, L. A., & Gudjonsson, G. H. (2004). [The effects of memory trace strength on eyewitness recall in children with and without intellectual disabilities](#). *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 89(1), 53-71. DOI:10.1016/j.jecp.2004.05.002

Children with mild moderate intellectual disabilities (ID) were compared with typically developing peers of the same chronological age (CA) on an eyewitness memory task in which memory trace strength was manipulated to examine whether increased memory trace strength would benefit those with ID more than those without ID. No evidence was found for this claim or for the notion that different mechanisms are implicated in memory processes for children with ID versus CA controls. Fuzzy-trace theory was also used to contrast question types that probed verbatim memory versus gist memory. Manipulations of trace strength, when used with immediate recall (to reduce the impact of decay), were predicted to improve verbatim memory more than gist memory. The results broadly supported the predictions. Performance was not improved in the stronger trace strength condition on measures of recall that tapped gist memory (e.g., open-ended recall), whereas performance was significantly better in the stronger trace strength condition on two of the three measures of recall that tapped verbatim memory (i.e., closed misleading questions, open-ended

specific questions). Differences in performance between the groups were quite marked on several question types, supporting previous findings that those with ID have certain vulnerabilities as potential witnesses compared with peers of the same CA.

Nathanson, R., & Crank, J. (2004). Interviewing children with disabilities. *National Association of Counsel for Children (NACC) Children's Law Manual*. NACC: Denver, Co.

Henry, L. A., & Gudjonsson, G. H. (2003). Eyewitness memory, suggestibility, and repeated recall sessions in children with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities. *Law and Human Behavior*, 27(5), 481-505. DOI:10.1023/A:1025434022699

This study of eyewitness memory questioned children with mild and moderate intellectual disabilities (ID) about a live staged event 1 day later and, again, 2 weeks later. Children with mild ID performed as well as typically-developing children of the same age in response to free recall instructions, and they were just as able as same age peers to resist misleading questions. However, they performed more poorly on general questions, probing for further information after free recall. The children with mild ID also changed their responses to specific questions more often in the repeated interview. The group of children with moderate ID showed markedly lower performance than peers of the same age on nearly every type of eyewitness memory question. Comparisons of the children with ID to mental age-matched peers indicated that performance was similar, although children with ID gave more information in response to free recall instructions and changed their answers in the repeated interview more often. Standardized measures of verbal memory (TOMAL) and suggestibility (Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale) were modest to moderate predictors of eyewitness memory performance. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2012 APA, all rights reserved)

Young, K., Powell, M. B., & Dudgeon, P. (2003). Individual differences in children's suggestibility: A comparison between intellectually disabled and mainstream samples. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 35(1), 31-49. DOI:10.1016/S0191-8869(02)00138-1

This study examined whether age, gender, intelligence, communication ability and shyness predict intellectually disabled children's susceptibility to an interviewer's misleading suggestions. Further, the study examined whether the relative influence of these factors differs between intellectually disabled and mainstream samples. Participants included 75 children with mild and

borderline intellectual disabilities (aged 77–158 months) and 83 mainstream children (aged 68–152 months). All children were individually administered the Yield and Shift subscales of the Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale (Form 2) as well as standardised measures of IQ, shyness and communication ability. For the intellectually disabled children, multiple regression analyses revealed that age, IQ and communication inversely predicted Yield suggestibility, however, none of the factors predicted Shift suggestibility. For the mainstream children, age made a significant independent contribution to both Yield and Shift suggestibility, while IQ was a significant predictor of Shift suggestibility. When comparing the relative impact of these factors across the samples, age had a significantly greater impact on mainstream (compared with intellectually disabled) children’s Shift suggestibility, while IQ had a significantly greater influence on intellectually disabled (compared with mainstream) children’s Yield scores. These findings highlight the limited generalisability of previous findings involving mainstream children’s suggestibility to intellectually disabled samples.

Aarons, N. M., & Powell, M. B. (2002). [Issues related to the interviewer's ability to elicit reports of abuse from children with an intellectual disability: A review](#). *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 14(3), 257-268. DOI:10.1080/10345329.2003.12036266

Chong, I., Yu, D., Martin, G., Harapiak, S., & Garinger, J. (2000). Response switching to repeated questions by individuals with developmental disabilities during interviews. *Developmental Disabilities Bulletin*, 28(1), 56-66..

Goldberg Edelson, M. (2023). Challenges in determining whether youth with autism spectrum disorder have been sexually abused: Implications for forensic interviewing. *The Journal of Forensic Practice*, 25(2), 152-165. DOI:10.1108/JFP-08-2022-0044

The purpose of this paper is to educate forensic interviewers about autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and tools for interviewing youth with ASD when there are concerns of child sexual abuse (CSA). Research is reviewed to discuss risk factors for CSA in youth with ASD, why CSA is often not recognized and research-based strategies for forensically interviewing youth with ASD. Youth with ASD are at increased risk of CSA compared to neurotypical peers, but recognition of CSA in youth with ASD can be difficult. Forensic interviewing strategies can help interviewers obtain reports of CSA from youth with ASD. Given the increase in prevalence of ASD and the increased risk of CSA, forensic interviewers need to have information about ASD, about why CSA may not be recognized, about risk factors for CSA and, especially, about how to accommodate for ASD when conducting forensic interviews.

Kaya, A., & Yıldız, G. (2023). "I think they do not know how to lie:" The perceptions of legal support staff about person with intellectual disabilities/autism in Turkish legal system. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 36(3), 516-528. DOI:10.1111/jar.13074

Increased social integration of individuals with intellectual disabilities or autism could may raise their likelihood of interacting with justice system and legal staff. The present article aimed to determine the perceptions of the legal support staff about the individuals with intellectual disabilities or autism. In the study, conducted with the phenomenological method, the views of 15 legal support staff were obtained. The study reported what participants perceived and examined whether participants had an accurate understanding of the experiences/support needs of people with intellectual disabilities/autism. The data were analysed with content analysis. Three themes were determined: (1) Experience of interview with an individual with intellectual disabilities/autism, (2) attitudes of judges, lawyers and other staff, and (3) abuse/trauma. Findings are consistent with literature. Individuals with intellectual disabilities/autism have problems in expressing themselves, also staff do not know them, do not know their features. Studies show that staff often do not know what to do in these interviews. Based on the participant perspectives, it

was determined that individuals with intellectual disabilities/autism experienced self-expression problems, interviewees did not understand children/individuals with intellectual disabilities or autism and could exhibit negative attitudes, the children could be abused and traumatised during judicial processes, they were more prone to abuse when compared to their peers, they could be involved in certain events more frequently and could be pushed to crime.

Krackow, E. (2023). Adults' perceptions of child maltreatment allegations: The influence of autism spectrum disorder diagnosis, parental coaching, accuracy of children's autobiographical recall and expert witness testimony. *Psychology of Consciousness: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 10(2), 134- 151. DOI:10.1037/cns0000301

Four experiments examined mock jurors' perceptions of a child witness with and without a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a developmental disorder that can heighten vulnerability to the provision of sparser, more erroneous memory reports, and greater levels of suggestibility under coercive interviewing conditions (Krackow, 2018). This series of experiments varied combinations of the following other variables and examined whether these variables interacted with ASD: (a) mention of parental coaching as the origin of the child's maltreatment allegation; (b) the strength of the evidence that the child witness's accusations were coached (allegations of parental coaching vs. allegations of parental coaching + expert witness testimony that the child showed evidence of being coachable); (c) the accuracy of the child's responses to basic autobiographical questions (consistently correct vs. made some errors); and (d) inclusion of expert witness testimony regarding how the diagnostic status of the child witness (a diagnosis of ASD versus typically developing) generally impacts eyewitness memory performance. Diagnostic status did not impact perceptions of child witness coachability. In some, but not all experiments, there was a significant effect of diagnostic status. Across experiments, the strongest effects were for the accuracy of the child's responses to autobiographical questions. In Experiment 2, accusations of parental coaching were not taken seriously by jurors until expert witness testimony was included. In Experiment 4, expert witness testimony regarding children's memory and suggestibility did not influence jurors' perceptions. In addition, this article examined mechanisms by which factual autobiographical response accuracy influences juror decision making. (PsycInfo Database Record © 2023 APA, all rights reserved)

Yıldız, G., & Kaya, A. (2023). Difficulties experienced by Turkish legal support officers in forensic interviews with individuals with autism and/or intellectual disabilities. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 1-22.
DOI: 10.1080/14789949.2023.2281576

Individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or intellectual disabilities (ID) can often be victims and sometimes witnesses or defendant in forensic events. It is important to investigate the experiences of forensic interviewing with these individuals and to identify associated issues to conduct better forensic interviews with them. The present study aims to determine the experiences of the staff and interviewees in forensic interviews conducted with individuals with ASD/ID. The study was conducted with a phenomenological approach, and the data were collected with the semi-structured interview method and analyzed with content analysis. The findings obtained with the analysis of the study data with content analysis revealed three themes: forensic interviews, legal support officer, and the judicial process. In the study, it was concluded that individuals with ASD/ID could not express themselves effectively, could be traumatized during the interviews, the interviewers felt inadequate and experienced associated problems, and required training support and counseling by a special education specialist. It is recommended to create a protocol for the participation of special education experts in forensic interviews in order to support individuals with ASD/ID.

Byrnes, K. (2021). Autism Spectrum Disorder and child maltreatment: forensic considerations. In *Emerging Programs for Autism Spectrum Disorder* (pp. 447-466). Academic Press.
DOI:10.1016/B978-0-323-85031-5.00029-3

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by difficulties in communication, social interactions, and behavioral challenges in the form of restricted interests and repetitive behaviors (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). These symptoms and behaviors, while occurring along a wide spectrum and varying in presentation between youth, contribute to a range of impairment in several domains of functioning (e.g., social, occupational). The following chapter will review research suggesting that those diagnosed with ASD may be more vulnerable to experience maltreatment at higher rates and the issues related to accurate tracking of the prevalence of maltreatment, how presentations associated with ASD may complicate investigation and contribute to certain outcomes, and relevant forensic considerations pertaining to both criminal investigation and child protective services involvement.

Blackburn, M. L. (2020). [Juror perceptions of interview quality from child victims with Autism](#) (Doctoral dissertation, The University of North Dakota).

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can affect multiple memory abilities, including episodic memory, source monitoring, and relational processing. The possibility of these memory deficits can affect how a child with ASD testifies in court if they are the victim or witness to a crime. These testimonies are especially crucial for Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) cases where one of the biggest challenges is the lack of physical evidence in most cases, which leads to an abundance of trials relying on the initial forensic interview with the victim and victim testimony. Due to this, and the increased chance of affected memory abilities, it is especially important that these interviews with an ASD witness are conducted using the best practices possible to ensure that the jury will perceive this witness as credible. Equally as necessary, the age of the child witness can affect how much the jury relies on their testimony. This study aims to explore the effects on juror perceptions for different types of forensic interviews as they relate to CSA cases using a victim with an ASD diagnosis, or no diagnosis. The present study will use the general population and participants will participate in a 2 Autism (ASD diagnosis, and no diagnosis) by 3 interview quality (good, typical, and poor) x 2 age (five-years-old, and eight-years-old) between-subjects design. We found that there was a significant interaction of victim age and interview quality, as well as a three-way interaction of victim age, interview quality and ASD diagnosis on verdict confidence. Secondly, we found that interview quality had a significant main effect on almost all of the perception scales, and that cognitive ability and suggestibility perceptions were significantly affected by the ASD diagnosis manipulation. Lastly, we examined age for exploratory purposes only and found a main effect on victim cognitive ability and an interaction of victim age and ASD diagnosis for victim honesty.

Kumar, M., Kim, S. H., Lord, C., Lyon, T. D., & Narayanan, S. (2020). [Leveraging linguistic context in dyadic interactions to improve automatic speech recognition for children](#). *Computer Speech & Language*, 63. DOI: 10.1016/j.csl.2020.101101

Automatic speech recognition for child speech has been long considered a more challenging problem than for adult speech. Various contributing factors have been identified such as larger acoustic speech variability including mispronunciations due to continuing biological changes in growth, developing vocabulary and linguistic skills, and scarcity of training corpora. A further

challenge arises when dealing with spontaneous speech of children involved in a conversational interaction, and especially when the child may have limited or impaired communication ability. This includes health applications, one of the motivating domains of this paper, that involve goal-oriented dyadic interactions between a child and clinician/adult social partner as a part of behavioral assessment. In this work, we use linguistic context information from the interaction to adapt speech recognition models for children speech. Specifically, spoken language from the interacting adult speech provides the context for the child's speech. We propose two methods to exploit this context: lexical repetitions and semantic response generation. For the latter, we make use of sequence-to-sequence models that learn to predict the target child utterance given context adult utterances. Long-term context is incorporated in the model by propagating the cell-state across the duration of conversation. We use interpolation techniques to adapt language models at the utterance level, and analyze the effect of length and direction of context (forward and backward). Two different domains are used in our experiments to demonstrate the generalized nature of our methods - interactions between a child with ASD and an adult social partner in a play-based, naturalistic setting, and in forensic interviews between a child and a trained interviewer. In both cases, context-adapted models yield significant improvement (upto 10.71% in absolute word error rate) over the baseline and perform consistently across context windows and directions. Using statistical analysis, we investigate the effect of source-based (adult) and target-based (child) factors on adaptation methods. Our results demonstrate the applicability of our modeling approach in improving child speech recognition by employing information transfer from the adult interlocutor.

Almeida, T. S., Lamb, M. E., & Weisblatt, E. J. (2019). [Effects of delay, question type, and socioemotional support on episodic memory retrieval by children with autism spectrum disorder](#). *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, *49*, 1111-1130.
DOI: 10.1007/s10803-018-3815-3

Twenty-seven autistic children and 32 typically developing (TD) peers were questioned about an experienced event after a two-week delay and again after a two-month delay, using the Revised National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Investigative Interview Protocol. Recall prompts elicited more detailed and more accurate responses from children than recognition prompts. Autistic children recalled fewer correct narrative details than TD peers when

questioned using open invitations, cued invitations, and directive questions. Nonetheless, they were as accurate as TD peers when responding to all types of prompts. The informativeness and accuracy of children's reports remained unchanged over time. Social support was beneficial when children were interviewed for the first time but not after a longer delay.

Mattison, M. L., Dando, C. J., & Ormerod, T. C. (2015). [Sketching to remember: Episodic free recall task support for child witnesses and victims with autism spectrum disorder](#). *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 45, 1751-1765. DOI:10.1007/s10803-014-2335-z

Deficits in episodic free-recall memory performance have been reported in children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), yet best practice dictates that child witness/victim interviews commence with a free-recall account. No 'tools' exist to support children with ASD to freely recall episodic information. Here, the efficacy of a novel retrieval technique, Sketch Reinstatement of Context (Sketch-RC), is compared with Mental Reinstatement of Context (MRC) and a no support control. Ninety children (45 with ASD; 45 matched typically developing) viewed a stimulus film, and were interviewed using one of the aforementioned techniques. The Sketch-RC technique was most effective, improving ASD participants' remembering without a concomitant increase in intrusions. This procedure offers a population-appropriate method for supporting free recall in criminal justice settings.

Maister, L., & Plaisted-Grant, K. C. (2011). Time perception and its relationship to memory in Autism Spectrum conditions. *Developmental Science*, 14(6), 1311-1322. DOI:10.1111/j.1467-7687.2011.01077.x

Timing is essential for the development of cognitive skills known to be impaired in Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC), such as social cognition and episodic memory abilities. Despite the proposal that timing impairments may underpin core features of ASC, few studies have examined temporal processing in ASC and they have produced conflicting results. The present study first addressed discrepancies between previous experiments before testing the assumption that timing impairments may underpin key aspects of autism, by relating differences in temporal processing in the ASC group to memory abilities. Errors in duration reproduction in high functioning children with ASC were observed for the shortest and longest duration tested. While the former was due to

attentional factors, the latter was due to deficient timing related to atypical episodic memory processing. These findings suggest that temporal processing abilities play a key role in the poor development of both social cognition and episodic memory abilities associated with ASC.

North, A. S., Russell, A. J., & Gudjonsson, G. H. (2008). High functioning autism spectrum disorders: An investigation of psychological vulnerabilities during interrogative interview. *The Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, *19*(3), 323–334.
DOI:10.1080/14789940701871621

Forensic psychologists and psychiatrists are commonly asked to ascertain the reliability of statements made by suspects to the police during questioning and to assess an individual's vulnerability to providing information which is inaccurate, unreliable, and misleading during police interview. Autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are characterised by qualitative impairments in social communication and interaction, and a restricted or repetitive pattern of behaviours, interests, and activities. It is not clear whether people with ASD are more vulnerable at interview, or more prone to respond negatively to interrogative pressure, when compared with the general population. In the present study, 26 individuals with high functioning ASD, and 27 gender- and IQ-matched controls, were compared on measures of interrogative suggestibility and compliance as well as on measures of anxiety, depression, the extent to which they feared negative evaluation by others, and whether they had a suspicious outlook. There were no significant between-group differences on the measures of suggestibility, but the group with ASD were rated as significantly more compliant than the controls in terms of both parental and self-report, and also had higher scores on measures of depression, anxiety, fear of negative social evaluation and paranoia. Bi-modal distribution of suggestibility scores within the ASD group indicates that individual characteristics should be taken into account when considering an assessment. Individuals with ASD may be more eager to please or to avoid conflict and confrontation than controls, and may be more prone to respond compliantly to requests and demands.

McCrorry, E., Henry, L. A., & Happé, F. (2007). Eye-witness memory and suggestibility in children with Asperger syndrome. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 48(5), 482-489. DOI:10.1111/j.1469-7610.2006.01715.x

Individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) present with a particular profile of memory deficits, executive dysfunction and impaired social interaction that may raise concerns about their recall and reliability in forensic and legal contexts. Extant studies of memory shed limited light on this issue as they involved either laboratory-based tasks or protocols that varied between participants. The current study used a live classroom event to investigate eye-witness recall and suggestibility in children with Asperger syndrome (AS group; $N = 24$) and typically developing children (TD group; $N = 27$). All participants were aged between 11 and 14 years and were interviewed using a structured protocol. Two measures of executive functioning were also administered. The AS group were found to be no more suggestible and no less accurate than their peers. However, free recall elicited less information, including gist, in the AS group. TD, but not AS, participants tended to focus on the socially salient aspects of the scene in their free recall. Both general and specific questioning elicited similar numbers of new details in both groups. Significant correlations were found between memory recall and executive functioning performance in the AS group only. The present study indicates that children with AS can act as reliable witnesses but they may be more reliant on questioning to facilitate recall. Our findings also provide evidence for poor gist memory. It is speculated that such differences stem from weak central coherence and lead to a reliance on generic cognitive processes, such as executive functions, during recall. Future studies are required to investigate possible differences in compliance, rates of forgetting and false memory.

Bowler, D. M., Gardiner, J. M., & Berthollier, N. (2004). [Source memory in adolescents and adults with Asperger's syndrome](#). *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 34, 533-542. DOI:10.1037/bul0000225

Memory difficulties in autism are observed mainly on measures like free recall, where test procedures provide no support for memory. When support is present, such as in cued recall, difficulties are less evident. Such observations may explain the mixed findings on source memory in autism. Bennetto, Pennington and Rogers (*Child Development*, 67, 1816–1835) found increased earlier-list intrusions in a multi-list free-recall paradigm (support absent), yet Farrant, Blades and

Boucher (*Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 28, 43– 50) reported no impairment in identification of who had spoken a particular word at study (support present). We tested the effects on source memory of presence or absence of support for source in participants with Asperger’s syndrome. The Asperger participants’ overall deficit in source memory was largely eliminated when source was supported at test.

ADHD

Benedan, L., Zajac, R., McFarlane, F., & Powell, M. B. (2020). Attentional difficulty is a risk factor for interrogative suggestibility in preschoolers. *Children and Youth Services Review, 119*. DOI:10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.10548

Preschool children are particularly prone to suggestion. Here, we examined the extent to which temperament variables and internalising and externalising problems influenced preschoolers' suggestibility. Children aged between 3 and 5 years (N = 140) completed the Video Suggestibility Scale for Children (Scullin & Ceci, 2001), and their kindergarten teachers completed two questionnaires: the EAS Temperament Survey for Children, and the Child Behaviour Checklist. As expected, age and free recall performance were both negatively related to susceptibility to misleading questions. Attentional difficulty was the only individual difference variable that added predictive value to this model. None of our individual difference variables were related to the extent to which children changed their responses in the face of negative feedback. We propose that attentional difficulties might be a particularly strong correlate of suggestibility when children are very young, and we outline the implications of this finding for forensic interviewers who solicit preschoolers' accounts.

Plummer, C., & Humphrey, N. (2009). Time perception in children with ADHD: The effects of task modality and duration. *Child Neuropsychology, 15*(2), 147-162.
DOI:10.1080/09297040802403690

The purpose of the current study was to examine the performance of children with and without ADHD in time reproduction tasks involving varying durations and modalities. Twenty children with ADHD and 20 healthy controls completed time reproduction tasks in three modalities (auditory, visual, and a unique combined auditory/visual condition) and six durations (1 second, 4 seconds, 12 seconds, 24 seconds, 48 seconds, and 60 seconds). Consistent with our predictions, we found main effects of group (participants with ADHD were significantly less accurate than those without ADHD), duration (accuracy decreased as temporal duration increased), and modality (responses in the combined condition were more accurate than those in the auditory condition, which in turn were more accurate than those in the visual condition). Furthermore, predicted interactions between group and duration (the discrepancy in performance between the two groups grew as temporal duration increased), and group and modality (the modality effect was of greater

for participants with ADHD) were supported. A marginal, nonsignificant interaction between group, modality, and duration was also found. These findings are discussed in relation to current theory on the nature of cognitive deficits evident in individuals with ADHD, and methodological limitations are noted.

Other

Reiman, E. (2014). [Implicit bias about disabilities: Does it exist for forensic interviewers and could it affect child credibility decisions in child abuse investigations: An exploratory study](#). University of New York. Dissertations and Theses, 2014-Present. Paper 466.

Rainville, C. (2012). Best practices for interviewing children with disabilities. *ABA Child Law Practice*, 31(5), 65, 70-72.

No document can address every situation that you will face in the field as you interview children in suspected cases of sexual abuse. Some situations may require emergency attention, and the steps recommended here may be impossible. However, to the extent that you can control the speed of the investigation, this document sets forth the best practices learned through our experience working with children with disabilities.

Oosterhoorn, R., & Kendrick, A. (2001). No sign of harm: Issues for disabled children communicating about abuse. *Child Abuse Review*, 10(4), 243-253. DOI:10.1002/car.697

While all children may be the victims of abuse, disabled children are particularly vulnerable. This paper explores the views of professionals working with children using alternative/augmented communication systems on the issues relating to communication about abuse. Interviews were carried out with 20 staff from eight establishments for disabled children across Scotland. It describes the range of alternative/augmented communication systems used and the barriers to communication about abuse. Staff generally accepted the importance of providing the appropriate vocabulary in augmented communication systems, but systems that provide such vocabulary were not widely used. Staff considered that a major difficulty concerned the level of understanding disabled children might have about concepts of abuse. They were unsure how the appropriate vocabulary could be introduced in a natural way and how links could be made between the signs and their meanings. Staff saw themselves as those most able to protect the children, but it was felt that discovery of abuse was more likely to come from them noticing physical signs, behaviour or mood changes than from the child communicating explicitly about abuse. The need for appropriate training and increased coordination between social work, health and education is highlighted.