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Kyriakidou, M & Zalaf, A

Author post-print (accepted) deposited by Coventry University's Repository

Original citation & hyperlink:

Kyriakidou, M & Zalaf, A 2016, 'Transcribing the First Decade of Children's Videotaped Testimonies in Cyprus: Tourist Season Times' *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, vol 13, no. 3, pp. 267-276

<https://dx.doi.org/10.1002/jip.1456>

DOI 10.1002/jip.1456

ISSN 1544-4759

ESSN 1544-4767

Publisher: Wiley

This is the peer reviewed version of the following article: Kyriakidou, M & Zalaf, A 2016, 'Transcribing the First Decade of Children's Videotaped Testimonies in Cyprus: Tourist Season Times' *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, vol 13, no. 3, pp. 267-276, which has been published in final form at <https://dx.doi.org/10.1002/jip.1456>. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Wiley Terms and Conditions for Self-Archiving.

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Transcribing the First Decade of Children's Videotaped Testimonies in Cyprus: Tourist Season Times

MARILENA KYRIAKIDOU^{1*} and ALEXIA ZALAF²

¹Violence and Interpersonal Aggression, Coventry University, Coventry, UK

²Research Team, Association for the Prevention and Handling of Family Violence, Nicosia, Cyprus

Abstract

Familiarising researchers and practitioners with different countries' policies for police interviews with children contributes to an exchange of knowledge and strengthens global approaches against child abuse. We start by describing the system of videotaped testimonies in Cyprus during the first 10 years of this system's implementation. We then continue on to the effects of tourism on police interviews with children. Police forces in destinations with high tourist numbers need to comprehend how tourist seasons could influence police interviews with children. No studies investigated whether children of tourists testified in police departments during their holidays. We explored how tourist seasons affected the number of testimonies obtained by Cyprus police forces, taking into account the presence of non-Cypriot and non-native speaking children, the number of testimonies taken in languages other than Greek, and the presence of translators during the interviews. We analysed the national sample of police interviews with children for a period of a decade using official police records and copies of transcripts of children's testimonies. As expected, the results revealed no significant differences in police interviews with children during tourist seasons but show a slight increase in the number of interviews with non-Cypriot children during tourist seasons.

Key words: children's testimonies; police interviews; Republic of Cyprus; tourist season; videotaped testimonies

INTRODUCTION

How do the most beautiful beaches in the world pumped full of tourists shape police interviews with children? We first aimed to introduce police interviews with children (e.g. legislation and police training) in a major tourist destination (Pender & Sharples, 2005) in the Mediterranean Sea, the island of Cyprus. Second, we aimed to explore whether or not tourist seasons affect police interviews with children. By the term 'affected', we mean whether the following factors experienced an increase or decrease: the number of interviews taken during the tourist seasons as well as the presence of non-Cypriot children, of non-native speaking children, interviews conducted in languages other than Greek, and the presence of translators.

POLICE INTERVIEWS WITH CHILDREN IN CYPRUS

In Cyprus, the system of videotaping children's testimonies was announced in 2000 and implemented in 2004 (Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law, 2000, 2004). A child is considered any person younger than 18 years old. Children as young as 3 years old are eligible to testify in police interviews and trials. Children testimonies are videotaped only if they are no other evidence for the investigation such as child sexual abuse allegations or children witnessing a murder. The first instance of a child's testimony being videotaped by the police occurred on 9 January 2004. That same year, a child's videotaped testimony was presented during a trial as the child's evidence-in-chief for the first time. The population of Cyprus was approximately 858,000 in 2013 (Statistical Service of the Republic of Cyprus, 2014), placing it as one of the smallest countries in the European Union. We therefore expected that the number of videotaped testimonies in Cyprus would be relatively small. Trials in Cyprus are classified as bench trials, that is, they occur without juries. Crimes against children are tried by the assize under the authority of three judges and district courts

under the authority of one judge. After a possible appeal from the defendant, cases may proceed to the Supreme Court with up to three judges. Since 2009, a child's testimony in Cyprus can convict a suspect without the need for corroborative evidence, irrespective of whether the child is under oath or not (Preventing and Combating the Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Law, 2014). Prior to this law coming into force, it was extremely difficult to convict a suspect with only a child's testimony. Similar difficulties in prosecuting cases in England and other countries that involve children's testimonies have been described in Spencer and Lamb (2012). The latest law, passed in 2014, included increased sentences for crimes against children and introduced life imprisonment when the victim is under 13 years old (Preventing and Combating the Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Law, 2014). However, the application of the system of videotaping children's testimonies was criticised by a study conducted in Cyprus in 2010. The study surveyed 26 police interviewers, judges, and lawyers about the advantages and challenges of the introduction of videotaping children's testimonies in Cyprus (Kyriakidou, Blades, Carroll, & Kapardis, 2011). The study showed that legal personnel widely welcomed this system but revealed that videotaped testimonies were not often presented in court. In addition, closed circuit television was not frequently used, and legal personnel called for pre-trial procedures to be introduced in Cyprus as well as the development of courtroom waiting areas specially design for children. In 2015, Cyprus became the 35th member of Europe to ratify the Lanzarote Convention, resulting in discussions currently taking place on how to make changes and to improve children experiences in forensic settings.

The Domestic Violence and Child Abuse (DV/CA) Office of the police force was formed in August 2002. The DV/CA office is responsible for applying and extending the use of

videotaped testimonies, including national police training for police interviews with children. Since the introduction of the Violence in the Family Law in 2000, which announced the videotaping of children's testimonies, six training courses were offered in 2003, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2015. Only police officers who have attended the DV/CA office training on children's videotaped testimonies are eligible to undertake such interviews.

There is no ongoing training for interviewers, although because of the high volume of literature supporting the benefits of ongoing training (e.g. Powell, Fisher, & Wright, 2005), procedures are currently being considered to start supporting ongoing training.

Police interviewers are currently obliged to attend only one training course, which lasts for 1 week. The training programme is designed by the DV/CA office and is divided into two parts, the theoretical and the practical. The theoretical part is presented during the first 3 days of the training course by two experienced police interviewers and academics qualified to PhD level in police interviews with children. This part includes the legislation on children's videotaped testimonies and police procedures on child abuse. During the 2003 and 2005 training courses, trainees were advised to conduct a detailed rapport phase and to place emphasis on this part of the interview. The rapport phase is the very beginning of an interview and mainly includes an explanation of the equipment, a truth and lies discussion, conversation about non-abuse topics, as well as a description of some ground rules (Home Office, 2007). However, from the 2008 training and subsequent training, trainees were advised to conduct the conversation about non-abuse topics with the interviewee before they enter the interview room. This change aimed to save police time when transcribing the videotaped testimonies. In Cyprus, the video-taped testimonies are only showed to the courtroom. Lawyers, judges, and investigators are only allowed to have transcripts of the testimonies. If lawyers or investigators wish to watch the video-taped testimony, they can do so in the

DV/CA office under supervision. The theoretical part of the training also includes presentations on Cyprus police guidelines and references to *Achieving Best Evidence* (Home Office, 2007). This part of the training focuses on how these documents advise the use of open-ended questions and facilitators. Academic lecturers cover research on police interviews with children addressing children's memory, linguistic abilities, and suggestibility. Samples of good and poor interviewing techniques taken from actual transcripts of police interviews with children in Cyprus are also presented on Power Point slides. These samples of good and poor police interviewing techniques with children are analysed by a scholar prior to the training and are discussed in detail during the last section of the theoretical training. Displaying examples of good and bad interviews to trainees has been used repeatedly in the past as an indication of a good training programme (as summarised in Powell et al., 2005).

There is always a practical part of the DV/CA office training programme, but it has encountered minor variations throughout the years. For example, in 2008, adult actors played the role of children during the practical training. The actors were given scenarios from real life investigations into child abuse. Trainees took turns to interview these actors, operate the actual video equipment, and watch the mock interview live on a screen. Feedback was provided by experienced interviewers on this practical training. In 2015, the practical training consisted of trainees distributed into groups. Within each group, each trainee took the role of the interviewee, interviewer, and observer (responsible for commenting on the conversation's appropriate and inappropriate approaches). During this role play, two experienced interviewers and one scholar on police interviews with children provided feedback on the question types' appropriateness as well as the question's topic focus in order to elicit the most useful evidence for an investigation. Feedback was given during the role play and afterwards in front of all trainees.

Police guidelines on children's videotaped testimonies are divided into two parts. The first part presents the laws relating to children's videotaped testimonies. The second part presents instructions to the police on how to videotape children's testimonies. This part includes technical details on how to handle and store the videotaping equipment as well as directions on how best to interview children. The guidelines state that the recording of a child's testimony should avoid recording neutral conversations during the opening and closure of the interview. The police guidelines share many similarities with the Memorandum of Good Practice on video-recorded interviews with child witnesses for criminal proceedings (Home Office, 1992) and *Achieving Best Evidence* published by the Home Office in 2007. A key similarity is that both guidelines emphasise the importance of using openended questions and avoiding specific or focused ones, as well as the structure of the interviews, which includes a rapport phase, a free narrative phase, a questioning phase, and a closure phase.

Kyriakidou (2011) analysed 46 police interviews with children in Cyprus conducted between 2004 and 2009. The study revealed that appropriate question types (e.g. facilitators and open questions 'Tell me about it') represented 6.7% of all questions types. The rest of the interviewing approaches were valued as 50.2% for yes/no questions (e.g. 'Was he tall?'), 36.5% for wh-questions (including how questions), and 6.5% for choice questions (e.g. 'Was he tall or short?'; Kyriakidou, 2011). The same study showed that 32% of all useful details were gained by appropriate interviewing approaches. These findings replicate earlier studies in Israel (Lamb et al., 1996), in Norway (Thoresen, Lønnum, Melinder, Stridbeck, & Magnussen, 2006), in Sweden (Cederborg, Orbach, Sternberg, & Lamb, 2000), and in the USA (Warren, Woodall, Hunt, & Perry, 1996), showing that interviewers' approaches mostly

rely on inappropriate questioning (as defined by Oxburgh, Myklebust, & Grant, 2010). For example, in England and Wales, almost 40% of all useful details were gained by inappropriate approaches (option-posing and suggestive prompt; Sternberg, Lamb, Davies, & Westcott, 2001), and in Finland, 50% of all interviewers' approaches were considered inappropriate (option-posing and suggestive prompts; Korkman, Santtila, & Sandnabba, 2006).

TOURIST SEASON

Cyprus is a major tourist destination, and tourism is a significant part of the economy (Pender & Sharpley, 2005; Sharpley, 2009). As described in Kokkinos and Kapardis (2014) study, Cyprus received approximately 2.3 million tourists (per year) between 2009 and 2012, and 43% of these visited Cyprus between June and August. There were no indications from the literature or police records that numbers of police personnel were increased during tourist season (June to August). The same study examined police records between 2009 and 2012 to explore tourists as reported perpetrators. The outcomes indicated that 2.7% of the total crime reported concerned tourists as perpetrators and 53% of the crime that involved tourists as perpetrators was committed between June and August. Therefore, there were no significant indications that high tourist numbers resulted in an increase of reported crime (Kokkinos & Kapardis, 2014). Further studies also supported the theory that tourism has only a minor influence on crime in cases where tourists are the perpetrators (Baker & Stockton, 2014). However, studies show that tourists may become victims of sexual harassment (e.g. De Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001; Kozak, 2007). De Albuquerque and McElroy (2001) used the survey commissioned by the Tourism Development Corporation in Barbados between 1991 and 1994 to explore tourist victimisation by harassment. A sample of 7,782 adult

tourists was asked, amongst other questions, whether they had been victims of harassment, including persistence of vendors, peddling of drugs, sexual harassment (such as sexual badgering, lewd acts and suggestions, and sexual molestation), verbal abuse, and physical abuse. In total, 59% of the participants reported some form of harassment. The younger the tourist's age, the more likely they were to experience harassment. Sexual harassment represented 8% of all harassments reported, and women were more likely to be harassed sexually. These outcomes were also replicated by recent studies (Kozak, 2007).

However, no studies focused on how the tourist season may influence the number of police interviews with children, signifying that tourists' children may become victims of sexual harassment. With many children accompanying their families on holiday, we need to understand further if any tourists' children end up testifying to the police force.

Understanding how the tourist season may influence child abuse allegations can also help the police force take necessary measures to handle new challenges during the tourist season. We aimed to expand earlier literature, which explores if tourists' children become victims and whether this victimisation is reported to the police. Having access to the national sample of police interviews with children in Cyprus, we had the opportunity to explore the following:

First Research Question If there were any fluctuations in the number of police interviews with children during the tourist season (June to August) from 2004 until 2014.

Second Research Question If there were any fluctuations in the following four variables during the tourist season (June to August) from 2004 until 2014:

- Number of non-Cypriot children;
- Number of non-native speaking children;

- Number of interviews conducted in languages other than Greek; and
- Number of translators.

We expected a minor but not significant increase in the number of police interviews with children during the tourist season because of the slight increase in crime in Cyprus during this season (Kokkinos & Kapardis, 2014). As a small number of adult tourists experience sexual harassment (de Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001; Kozak, 2007), we expected a small number of children to be victimised during their holidays and to testify to the police. Consequently, we expected a minor but not significant increase of the variables non-Cypriot, non-native speaking children, interview conducted in languages other than Greek and translators during the tourist season.

METHOD

Coding and data analysis

Our first dependent variable was the number of police interviews conducted. Because we did not have access to the videotapes, we measured this based on the number of transcripts of children's interviews in the DV/CA office. Other dependent variables were whether children were Cypriot or non-Cypriot, Greek-speaking or non-native speaking, whether or not Greek was the language used in the interview, and whether or not translators were present. The four seasons were our independent variable.

Normality test

Normality was tested for all variables with the Shapiro–Wilk test. The number of testimonies per season was normally distributed ($p > 0.05$). The variables concerning non-Cypriot

children, non-native speaking children, interviews conducted in languages other than Greek, and the number of translators were not normally distributed ($p < 0.005$).

Procedure

Details of these dependent variables were collected from the transcripts and police records. The DV/CA office is responsible for storing all transcribed and videotaped police interviews with children in Cyprus. The police records are stored on an electronic database. Police officers all over Cyprus involved in any case are required to complete the forms on the police electronic database, so details concerning police interviews with children from all over Cyprus should have been stored on this database. Data were collected on May and August 2014. All details were double checked separately by two researchers. Details related to the study's research questions were then added into the Statistical Package of Social Sciences (SPSS, International Business Machines Corporation (IBM), Armonk, New York, United States) software to be analysed.

Ethical issues

Permission was given by the Chief-of-Police and the DV/CA office to access children's transcribed testimonies, and indirect access was given to police records (if researchers needed to find a detail from the police records, they were required to ask a police officer to locate the answer for them). The study was in compliance with the Processing of Personal Data (Protection of the Individual) Law 2001 and its amendment (Law No. 37 (I)/2003; e.g. no details revealing children's or interviewers' identities were used).

RESULTS

Sample

From the police records and transcripts, we gathered details from 134 police cases that involved a child's videotaped testimony. These were from 2004 to 2014. The average age of the children was 9.97 (standard deviation = 3.28) with the youngest child being 3 years old and the oldest 17 years old. There were two cases in which we were unable to locate the child's age from the transcripts or police records. These two cases had copies of transcripts in the DV/CA office and were added under the theme of police interviews with children in the police records, so they were included with the rest of our analyses. There were 80 cases with female interviewees (60% of the sample) and 54 with male interviewees.

Table 1. Seasons and testimonies

Season	No. (%) of testimonies	No. (%) of non-Cypriot	No. (%) of non-native speaking	No. (%) of interviews not in Greek	No. (%) of translators
Winter	38 (28)	7 (32)	7 (32)	7 (35)	7 (37)
Spring	42 (31)	6 (27)	6 (27)	4 (20)	4 (21)
Summer	32 (24)	7 (32)	7 (32)	7 (35)	6 (32)
Autumn	22 (17)	2 (9)	2 (9)	2 (10)	2 (10)
Total	134 (100)	22 (100)	22 (100)	20 (100)	19 (100)

First research question

Almost one-third of all transcripts were taken during spring. Summer, which represents the tourist season in Cyprus, did not show any noteworthy increase in the number of testimonies taken during this period (Table 1). We conducted one-way analysis of variance to explore whether the differing numbers of testimonies taken each season were significant. The test did not show any significant difference in the number of testimonies taken each season $F(1, 2)=8$, $p>0.05$.

Second research question

There were 22 cases where children were non-Cypriot and non-native speaking. These children were Polish ($n = 2$), Dutch ($n = 3$), Bulgarian ($n = 1$), English ($n = 4$), Russian ($n = 5$), Arabic ($n = 2$), and Romanian ($n = 5$). However, there were two of these cases in which the child could speak Greek. Consequently, the interview was not conducted in Greek in 20 cases. There was one case in which the interviewer could speak both Greek and English, so the number of translators was 19 in total. Even if the tourist season (summer) saw fewer testimonies than spring and winter, the tourism season still had as many non-Cypriot children as the winter season and more (plus one case) testimonies with non-Cypriot children than spring (Table 1). Two testimonies taken in spring with non-Cypriot children were taken in Greek without the need for a translator indicating that these children were living in Cyprus and were not tourists. Based on the Kurksal–Wallis test, there were no significant differences between the number of non-Cypriot children ($\chi^2(3, N = 134) = 6,023, p = 0.110$), non-native speaking children ($\chi^2(3, N = 134) = 6,023, p = 0.110$), interviews conducted in languages other than Greek ($\chi^2(3, N = 134) = 5,014, p = 0.171$), and the number of translators ($\chi^2(3, N = 134) = 4,007, p = 0.261$) per season.

DISCUSSION

By having access to the national sample of police interviews with children covering a decade, we studied whether or not the tourist season affects police interviews with children in Cyprus. Our study indicates that there were no significant fluctuations in the number of police interviews with children, the number of non-Cypriot children, the number non-native speaking children, the number of interviews conducted in languages other than Greek, and the presence of translators during tourist seasons (June to August) from 2004 to 2014. These

outcomes were in line with earlier literature on tourism and crime research as well as our hypothesis.

Our study was the first to comprehensively introduce police interviews with children in Cyprus in terms of legislation on forensic interviews with children, trial procedures, police training, police guidelines, and the quality of children's testimonies. We portrayed the introduction of the new system of video recording children's testimonies on a national level framing an essential timescale that can act as an important time point for comparison in future studies. For example, the absence of any ongoing training is an issue that the police is seriously considering changing. Moreover, studies capturing police interviews with children during the first decade that the system of videotaping children's testimonies was introduced were also presented along with legal personnel's perspectives on this system and the quality of question types used (Kyriakidou, 2011; Kyriakidou et al., 2011). Sharing our strengths and limitations is a privilege, not only for the Cyprus police but also for colleagues reading this paper, and the knowledge shared complements contemporary literature on child forensic testimonies.

Our study also supplements the current literature on exploring how high tourist numbers in some destinations may influence police interviews with children during tourist seasons. Having a national sample available, we noted that the tourist season does not result in increasing numbers of police interviews with children. Tourist insignificant effect on police interviews with children supports earlier research on Cyprus concerning tourism and crime (Kokkinos & Kapardis, 2014). Even if the tourist season did not result in an increase in the number of children testifying to the police, the tourist season did have (along with winter) the highest number of non-Cypriot children being interviewed. The high number (but still small

overall) of non-Cypriot children being interviewed during the tourist season replicates earlier findings of the small number of adult tourists that are assaulted sexually during their holidays (De Albuquerque & McElroy, 2001; Kozak, 2007). This could suggest a need to conduct future studies to investigate in more detail how tourist seasons influence police work with children's forensic testimonies.

One limitation of our study is the small sample size. The small difference (one to five cases) between the number of non-Cypriot children that has been interviewed in tourist season, spring, and autumn makes it challenging to reach any strong conclusions. A more qualitative analysis of the current sample as well as research with bigger samples could uncover more detail on how tourists influence children's forensic testimonies. Another limitation is that we may have missed some cases in our sample. Even if the DV/CA office stores transcripts of police interviews with children from all over Cyprus and the police records are expected to be completed by all police officers, it should be acknowledged that the copies of transcripts and police records may have some limitations. First, it is not mandatory for interviewers and investigators to send copies of their transcripts to the DV/CA office. Second, previous studies suggested that police records can be further improved (Report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary [HMIC] in England, HMIC, 2009, 2014; Newburn, 2008) and police record managers (such as in Sweden) can help with the quality and organisation of police records in digital and hard formats (Borglund, 2005). Consequently, there may have been police interviews with children that we did not have access to because it may be that not all transcripts have been sent to the DV/CA office and police records may not be detailed enough or may not have been completed by all police interviewers or investigators.

Despite these limitations, the study still offers an insight into the first years of the system of videotaping testimonies in Cyprus and aids our understanding of the tourist season and police interviews with children. Familiarising researchers and practitioners with different countries' policies for police interviews with children contributes to an exchange of knowledge and strengthens global approaches against child abuse. Looking at destinations with high tourist numbers in relation to police interviews with children is an under-researched field, and this study donates important information for further consideration.

Turning back to our opening question on How do the most beautiful beaches in the world pumped full of tourists shape police interviews with children?, our study describes the Cyprus environment of conducting police interviews with children, for example, ongoing training and bench trials and portrays Cyprus as a friendly tourist destination in which the tourist season does not significantly affect police interviews with children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the Head of Domestic Violence and Child Abuse Office of Cyprus police Mr. Kostas Veis and his colleagues. They were friendly, collaborative and more than helpful. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to work together.

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