

# Question Types in Forensic Interviews of Children

*A Bibliography*



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## **Scope**

This bibliography lists citations and abstracts to research publications addressing many aspects of questioning children in the forensic context.

## **Organization**

This bibliography includes citations and abstracts to articles, reports, books, and chapters arranged in date descending order. When possible, the abstracts included with the original publication are used in this bibliography. Links are provided to open access publications.

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## Question Types in Forensic Interviews of Children

### A Bibliography

Brubacher, S. P., Timms, L., Powell, M., & Bearman, M. (2019). "She wanted to know the full story": Children's perceptions of open versus closed questions. *Child Maltreatment*, 24(2), 222-231.

The current study explored children's perceptions of open and closed questions in an interview setting. Children aged 7–12 (n = 83) years watched a short film and were questioned about it by an interviewer who asked only open questions and an interviewer who asked only closed questions (counterbalanced). A third interviewer subsequently invited perceptions of each interview by asking children to compare the interviews on 10 attributes (e.g., length, perceived interviewer interest). Children's comparisons on each of the 10 attributes were analyzed quantitatively and their responses to the follow-up questions underwent thematic analysis. Overall, children tended to find closed questions easier than open questions because they required less thought to answer but felt more listened to and better able to give their stories in response to open questions. Their perceptions frequently matched findings in the literature about the utility of open versus closed questions. The research has implications for interviews with child victims.

Almeida, T. S., Lamb, M. E., & Weisblatt, E. J. (2018). 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(3), 1111-1130.

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.

Evans, A. D., Stolzenberg, S. N., & Lyon, T. D. (2017). Pragmatic failure and referential ambiguity when attorneys ask child witnesses “do you know/remember” questions. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 23(2), 191-199.

“Do you know” and “Do you remember” (DYK/R) questions explicitly ask whether one knows or remembers some information while implicitly asking for that information. This study examined how 4- to 9-year-old (N 104) children testifying in child sexual abuse cases responded to DYK/R wh- (who, what, where, why, how, and which) and yes/no questions. When asked DYK/R questions containing an implicit wh- question requesting information, children often provided unelaborated “yes” responses. Attorneys’ follow-up questions suggested that children usually misunderstood the pragmatics of the questions. When DYK/R questions contained an implicit yes/no question, unelaborated “yes” or “no” responses could be responding to the explicit or the implicit questions resulting in referentially ambiguous responses. Children often provided referentially ambiguous responses and attorneys usually failed to disambiguate children’s answers. Although pragmatic failure following DYK/R wh- questions decreased with age, the likelihood of referential ambiguity following DYK/R yes/no questions did not. The results highlight the risks of serious miscommunications caused by pragmatic misunderstanding and referential ambiguity when children testify.

Gagnon, K., & Cyr, M. (2017). Sexual abuse and preschoolers: Forensic details in regard of question types. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 67, 109-118.

The present study looks into the association between the types of questions used by interviewers and the number of details obtained among preschoolers during an investigative interview. An innovative aspect of this study concerns the analysis of question subtypes (eg. open-ended directive and closed-ended). Analysis of variance were carried out on 55 NICHD interview protocols conducted among children aged three to five years old who disclosed an episode of sexual abuse. Findings reveal that interviewers’ style is in accordance with best practices in conducting investigative interviews with children allegedly victims of sexual abuse. As expected, there are more details in answers: 1) provided by older children compared to younger counterparts; 2) following invitations compared to all other question types. However, the analysis of question subtypes has shown that answers given to an open-ended question using cues (cued invitations or directive open-ended) obtained more details concerning the incident compared to the absence of

cues (general invitations). These findings support the fact that children as young as three years old are able to produce informative responses when questioned appropriately about the CSA incident and propose reconsidering the types of question that should mainly be used with them. Findings suggest that the use of open-ended questions, using a cue previously mentioned in the testimony of the child, helps provide a detailed account during an investigative interview conducted among preschoolers allegedly victims of sexual abuse. © 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Goetzold, S. (2017). An open and shut case of closed questions: An exploration of joint investigative interview training in Scotland. *Child Abuse Review*, 26(2), 116-129.

Children in Scotland who are subject to child protection interviews should be interviewed jointly by specially trained police officers and social workers who have attended training based on a national curriculum. This study, which was conducted in two Strands, explores the effectiveness of the training, focusing specifically on the free narrative phase of the interview. Strand A explores respondents' self-evaluation, obtained through semi-structured interviews with 16 participants, while Strand B comprises an analysis of 21 role-play interviews. The findings show a considerable discrepancy between perceived practitioner confidence in ability and actual skill levels observed in role-plays, where interviewers showed a persistent overuse of specific and closed questions, while neglecting the use of open prompts and open questions to encourage free narrative. The study concludes that the national curriculum is not as effective in preparing participants for the free narrative phase of the interview as perceived by participants. Possible reasons are explored. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

London, K., Hall, A. K., & Lytle, N. E. (2017). Does it help, hurt, or something else? The effect of a something else response alternative on children's performance on forced-choice questions. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 23(3), 281-289.

Forensic guidelines recommend minimizing forced-choice questions when interviewing children. We investigated whether adding a "something else" alternative to forced-choice questions affected 3- to 5-year-olds' (N 94) reports of an event involving innocuous touch. Following a 1-week delay, children were randomly assigned to receive either standard 2-alternative forced-choice questions or the same questions with an additional something else alternative. All children received 3

counterbalanced question types: correct alternative present, no correct alternative present, and unanswerable. Children's overall accuracy was not affected by the something else alternative except on questions with no correct alternative present, where performance went from 15% to 31% accurate. Children selected or generated inaccurate and speculative responses to the majority of unanswerable questions regardless of a something else alternative. These findings suggest that the inclusion of a something else alternative does not bypass concerns about the use of forced-choice questions during interviews with children.

Malloy, L. C., Orbach, Y., Lamb, M. E., & Walker, A. G. (2017). "How" and "Why" prompts in forensic investigative interviews with preschool children. *Applied Developmental Science, 21*(1), 58-66.

Although young children may frequently be asked "How" and "Why" questions, it is unclear whether they have the ability to respond well enough to justify the use of these words during investigative interviews. The range of possible uses and interpretations of the words "How" and "Why" makes it critical to examine their use when communicatively immature children are interviewed. In this study, police interviews of 3- to 5-year-old suspected victims of sexual abuse (n =49) were examined. The use of How/Why prompts by interviewers and children's responses to interviewers' How/Why prompts were coded. How/Why prompts represented 22% of all interviewer prompts. Of all details provided by children, however, 8.5% were in response to How/Why prompts. In addition, children provided the information sought in response to only 20% of the interviewers' How/Why prompts, whereas uninformative responses were relatively common. Children responded to more How/Why prompts with the information sought by interviewers as they grew older. The findings suggest that How/Why prompts may not be particularly effective when interviewing preschool children.

Stolzenberg, S. N., McWilliams, K., & Lyon, T. D. (2017). [Ask versus tell: Potential confusion when child witnesses are questioned about conversations](#). *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied, 23*(4), 447-459.

Children's potential confusion between "ask" and "tell" can lead to misunderstandings when child witnesses are asked to report prior conversations. The verbs distinguish both between interrogating and informing and between requesting and commanding. Children's understanding was examined using

both field (i.e., Study 1) and laboratory (i.e., Studies 2-4) methods. Study 1 examined 100 5- to 12-year-olds' trial testimony in child sexual abuse cases, and found that potentially ambiguous use of ask and tell was common, typically found in yes/no questions that elicited unelaborated answers, and virtually never clarified by attorneys or child witnesses. Studies 2-4 examined 345 maltreated 6- to 11-year-olds' understanding of ask and tell. The results suggest that children initially comprehend telling as saying, and thus believe that asking is a form of telling. As such, they often endorsed asking as telling when asked/yes no questions, but distinguished between asking and telling when explicitly asked to choose. Their performance was impaired by movement between different use of the words. Child witnesses' characterization of their conversations can easily be misconstrued by the way in which they are questioned, leading questioners to misinterpret whether they were coached by disclosure recipients or coerced by abuse suspects.

Stolzenberg, S. N., McWilliams, K., & Lyon, T.D. (2017). [Spatial language, question type, and young children's ability to describe clothing: Legal and developmental implications.](#) *Law & Human Behavior*, 41(4), 398-409.

Children's descriptions of clothing placement and touching with respect to clothing are central to assessing child sexual abuse allegations. This study examined children's ability to answer the types of questions attorneys and interviewers typically ask about clothing, using the most common spatial terms (on/off, outside/inside, over/under). Ninety-seven 3- to 6-year-olds were asked *yes/no* (e.g. "Is the shirt on?"), *forced-choice* (e.g., "Is the shirt on or off?"), *open-choice* (e.g., "Is the shirt on or off or something else?"), or *where* questions (e.g., "Where is the shirt?") about clothing using a human figurine, clothing, and stickers. Across question types, children generally did well with simple clothing or sticker placement (e.g. pants completely on), except for *yes/no* questions about "over," suggesting children had an underinclusive understanding of the word. When clothing or sticker placement was intermediate (e.g., pants around ankles, and therefore neither completely on nor off), children performed poorly except when asked *where* questions. A similar task using only stickers and boxes, analogous to forensic interviewers' assessments of children's understanding, was only weakly predictive of children's ability to describe clothing. The results suggest that common methods of questioning young children about clothing may lead to substantial misinterpretation.



Ahern, E. C., Stolzenberg, S. N., McWilliams, K., & Lyon, T. (2016). The effects of secret instructions and yes/no questions on maltreated and non-maltreated children's reports of a minor transgression. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, *34*, 784-802.

This study examined the effects of secret instructions (distinguishing between good/bad secrets and encouraging disclosure of bad secrets) and yes/no questions (DID: "Did the toy break?" versus DYR: "Do you remember if the toy broke?") on 262 maltreated and non-maltreated children's (age range 4–9 years) reports of a minor transgression. Over two-thirds of children failed to disclose the transgression in response to free recall (invitations and cued invitations). The secret instruction increased disclosures early in free recall, but was not superior to no instruction when combined with cued invitations. Yes/no questions specifically asking about the transgression elicited disclosures from almost half of the children who had not previously disclosed, and false alarms were rare. DYR questions led to ambiguous responding among a substantial percentage of children, particularly younger children. The findings highlight the difficulties of eliciting transgression disclosures without direct questions. Copyright # 2017 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Andrews, S. J., Ahern, E. C., Stolzenberg, S. N., & Lyon, T. D. (2016). The productivity of wh-prompts when children testify. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, *30*(3), 341-349.

Wh- prompts (what, how, why, who, when, and where) vary widely in their specificity and accuracy, but differences among them have largely been ignored in research examining the productivity of different question types in child testimony. We examined 120 six- to 12-year-olds' criminal court testimony in child sexual abuse cases to compare the productivity of various wh-prompts. We distinguished among wh- prompts, most notably the following: what/how-happen prompts focusing generally on events, what/how-dynamic prompts focusing on actions or unfolding processes/events, what/how-causality prompts focusing on causes and reasons, and what/how-static prompts focusing on non-action contextual information regarding location, objects, and time. Consistent with predictions, what/how-happen prompts were the most productive, and both what/how-dynamic prompts and whprompts about causality were more productive than other wh- prompts. Prosecutors asked proportionally more what/how-dynamic prompts and fewer what/how-static prompts than defense attorneys. Future research and

interviewer training may benefit from finer discrimination among wh- prompts. Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd

Mehrani, M. B., & Peterson, C. (2015). Recency tendency: Responses to forced-choice questions. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 29(3), 418-424.

The present study was conducted to investigate whether forced-choice questions would lead to any particular tendency in young children's responses. Two experiments were conducted in which 3- to 5-year-olds children were shown a short animation and then were asked a set of two-option, forced-choice questions. Consistent findings were obtained: (i) Forced-choice questions influenced children's responses; (ii) Children displayed a consistent 'recency tendency.' That is, they tended to choose the second option in forced-choice questions; (iii) This tendency grew weaker as children aged. The findings suggest that forced-choice questions carry some suggestibility load and can bias children's responses. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Andrews, S. J., & Lamb, M. E. (2014). The effects of age and delay on responses to repeated questions in forensic interviews with children alleging sexual abuse. *Law and Human Behavior*, 38(2), 171-180.

We examined transcripts of forensic interviews with 115 children aged between 3 and 12 years, interviewed between 1 day and 18 months after allegedly experiencing a single incident of sexual abuse. Repeated questions were categorized with respect to the reasons why interviewers asked questions again, how interviewers asked repeated questions, and how children responded. On average, interviewers asked 3 repeated questions per interview. As age increased, the frequency of question repetition declined but there was no association between repetition and delay. Interviewers most often repeated questions for clarification (53.1%), but questions were also repeated frequently to challenge children's previous responses (23.7%), and for no apparent reason (20.1%). In response, children typically repeated (54.1%) or elaborated on (31.5%) their previous answers; they contradicted themselves less often (10.8%). Questions repeated using suggestive prompts were more likely to elicit contradictions. There was no association between age or delay and the reasons why questions were repeated, how they were repeated, and how children responded. These findings emphasize the importance of training forensic interviewers to repeat

questions only when the children or interviewers seek clarification and to encourage children who are anxious or reluctant to disclose. All repeated questions should be open-ended and interviewers should explain to children why questions are being repeated. PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2014 APA, all rights reserved.

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.

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.

Gosse, L. L., & Roberts, K. P. (2014). Children's use of a 'time line' to indicate when events occurred. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 29(1), 36-43.

Children who allege abuse are often asked to provide temporal information such as when the events occurred. Yet, young children often have difficulty recalling temporal information due to their limited knowledge of temporal patterns and linguistic capabilities. As time is an abstract concept (we cannot see it), some investigators have begun to use 'time-lines' or pictorial representations of time to aid children. Yet, there is no published research testing whether children are able to use

time-lines and whether they can provide adequate temporal information using them. We tested whether children could indicate the time-of-day of events using a pictorial time-line and then compared their responses to their parents'. Seven- to 8-year-olds were most consistent with parental estimates while 4-year-olds were least consistent. Responses from the 5- to 6-year-olds depended on the temporal task. Guessing and using general knowledge to estimate the time-of-day were ruled out, and so children were genuinely drawing on episodic memory when making time-line judgments. Thus, there was a developmental progression in children's use of physical representations to communicate abstract information. These results are promising for the use of the time-line in forensic settings but much more research is needed.

Guadagno, B. L., & Powell, M. B. (2014). An examination of the prevalence of temporally leading questions in child witness interviews. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, 16(1), 16-25.

Leading questions are generally defined as those that raise details not provided by the witness. Leading questions can raise content details (eg, actions, objects, persons) or can refer to the time when details occurred. The latter questions are referred to as temporally leading. Study 1 compared the incidence of content and temporally leading questions in field interviews conducted by police officers when eliciting accounts from children about repeated, or a single episode of, abuse. Study 2 extended the analysis to use standardised mock rather than field interviews, where there was a precise record of what events occurred. In both studies, temporally leading questions were more frequent than content-leading questions, but only in situations in which multiple occurrences of the event were being discussed. The implications of these results are discussed.

Katz, C., & Barnett, Z. (2014). "Love covereth all transgressions": Children's experiences with physical abuse as portrayed in their narratives during forensic investigations. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 43, 1-7.

The aim of the current study is to promote understanding of children's lived experiences with physical abuse. This is an important area of research that has rarely been studied, and the current study provides a unique opportunity using children's narratives during forensic investigations. One

hundred and seventeen forensic investigations with children, alleged victims of continuous physical abuse by their biological parents, were randomly selected from all of the interviews that were conducted in Israel in 2011. The forensic investigations were conducted by well-trained forensic interviewers, and all interviewers used the NICHD Protocol, which allows standardized interviews. The analysis paradigm of the interviews was phenomenological, and a thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns within the children's narratives. Following a thorough thematic analysis, five key categories were identified based on the children's narratives: the children's sensations during the abusive incidents, the children's emotions, the children's understanding of their experiences, the dynamics within the families and the children's desires for the future. The discussion addresses the importance of integrating children's voices regarding their lived experiences into the work of practitioners and policy makers. The information that was gathered from the children's narratives can enhance the work of practitioners in both forensic and clinical contexts.

Newman, J. E., & Roberts, K. P. (2014). Subjective and non-subjective information in children's allegations of abuse. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 29*(2), 75-80.

In this study, we were interested in how interviewers elicit subjective information in investigations of child abuse (e.g., descriptions of thoughts, emotions, opinions). Sixty-one interviews of children aged 4–12 years old were analyzed to determine the amount of subjective information versus non-subjective event details reported, and the type of question that elicited the information. Interviewers elicited more non-subjective than subjective information, although there was more focus on subjective information in the rapport-building phase than in the substantive phase when the allegations were elicited. Interviewer prompts and child responsiveness was congruent such that non-subjective questions elicited more non-subjective information, and subjective interviewer questions elicited more subjective information. The presence of subjective information in children's testimony can influence children's credibility, and the results of this study demonstrate that forensic interviewers play a significant part in the level of subjective information children provide.

Yii, S. L. B., Powell, M. B., & Guadagno, B. (2014). The association between investigative interviewers' knowledge of question type and adherence to best-practice interviewing. *Legal and Criminological Psychology, 19*(2), 270-281.

It is well established that not all investigative interviewers adhere to 'best-practice' interview guidelines (i.e., the use of open-ended questions) when interviewing child witnesses about abuse. However, little research has examined the sub skills associated with open question usage. In this article, we examined the association between investigative interviewers' ability to *identify* various types of questions and adherence to open-ended questions in a standardized mock interview. Study 1, incorporating 27 trainee police interviewers, revealed positive associations between open-ended question usage and two tasks; a recognition task where trainees used a structured protocol to guide their response and a recall task where they generated examples of open-ended questions from memory. In Study 2, incorporating a more heterogeneous sample of 40 professionals and a different training format and range of tests, positive relationships between interviewers' identification of questions and adherence to best-practice interviewing was consistently revealed. A measure of interviewer knowledge about what constitutes best-practice investigative (as opposed to knowledge of question types) showed no association with interviewer performance. The implications of these findings for interviewer training programs are discussed.

Heather Fritzley, V., Lindsay, R. C., & Lee, K. (2013). Young children's response tendencies toward yes–no questions concerning actions. *Child Development, 84*(2), 711-725.

Two experiments investigated response tendencies of preschoolers toward yes–no questions about actions. Two hundred 2- to 5-year-old children were asked questions concerning actions commonly associated with particular objects (e.g., drinking from a cup) and actions not commonly associated with particular objects (e.g., kicking a toothbrush). The impact of delay and comprehension of questions were also investigated. Results revealed a consistent developmental transition: Younger children tended to display a yes bias whereas older children did not display a bias unless they faced incomprehensible questions, in which case they displayed a nay-saying bias. Delay shifted children's responses in such a way that "no" answers were given more often. These findings hold important implications regarding the use of yes–no questions with children.

Okanda, M., Kanda, T., Ishiguro, H., & Itakura, S. (2013). Three-and 4-year-old children's response tendencies to various interviewers. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 116*(1), 68-77.

Unlike young preschoolers, older preschoolers may exhibit a response bias under social pressure from authoritative interviewers. To examine this, 3- and 4-year-old preschoolers were asked yes–no questions about familiar and unfamiliar objects in three conditions. In one condition an adult asked them questions in a live interaction, in a second condition an adult asked questions via video, and in a third condition a robot asked questions via video. The 3-year-olds exhibited a yes bias—a tendency to say “yes”—in nearly all conditions. The only exception was when they were asked questions about unfamiliar objects by the human interviewer via video, where they did not respond in a biased manner. The 4-year-olds exhibited a yes bias in only one condition—when they were questioned by a live human interviewer about both objects. They also exhibited a nay-saying bias when asked questions about unfamiliar objects in both video conditions, and they did not show any response bias in other conditions. The results suggest that the social pressure from an authoritative adult in a live interaction is problematic.

Powell, M. B., Benson, M. S., Sharman, S. J., Guadagno, B., & Steinberg, R. (2013). Errors in the identification of question types in investigative interviews of children. *Police Science & Management, 15*(2), 144-156.

This study examined the incidence and nature of the errors made by trainee coders during their coding of question types in interviews in which children disclosed abuse. Three groups of trainees (online, postgraduate and police) studied the coding manual before practising their question coding. After this practice, participants were given two-page field transcripts to code in which children disclosed abuse. Their coding was assessed for accuracy; any errors were analysed thematically. The overall error rate was low, and police participants made the fewest errors. Analysis of the errors revealed four common misunderstandings: (1) the use of a ‘wh’ question always denotes a specific cued-recall question; (2) ‘Tell me’ always constitutes an open-ended question; (3) open-ended questions cannot include specific detail; and (4) specific questions cannot elicit elaborate responses. An analysis of coding accuracy in the one group who were able to practise question coding over time revealed that practice was essential for trainees to maintain their accuracy. Those who did not practise decreased in coding accuracy. This research shows that

trainees need more than a coding manual; they must demonstrate their understanding of question codes through practice training tasks. Misunderstandings about questions need to be elicited and corrected so that accurate codes are used in future tasks.

Rocha, E. M., Marche, T. A., & Briere, J. L. (2013). The effect of forced-choice questions on children's suggestibility: A comparison of multiple-choice and yes/no questions. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement*, 45(1), 1-11.

Previous research has suggested that, when interviewing young children, responses to yes/no questions are less reliable than responses to multiple-choice questions (Peterson & Grant, 2001). However, according to fuzzy trace theory, some forms of multiple-choice questions should elicit higher error rates than yes/no questions. Fuzzy trace theory is a theory of cognitive development that suggests there are two types of memory traces: Verbatim traces include exact details of an experience, whereas gist traces represent the patterns and meanings extracted from that experience. Based on the assumptions of this theory, we explored the effect of question format (yes/no vs. multiple-choice), temporal delay (short delay vs. long delay) and age (4- to 6-year-olds, 7- to 9-year-olds, and 10- to 12-year-olds) on children's suggestibility for a naturalistic, potentially stressful event; namely, a dental procedure. Following the dental procedure, and again after a 6- to 8-week delay, children ( $N = 68$ ) were given 24 forced-choice questions regarding the dental event. Consistent with fuzzy trace theory, the findings suggest that (a) multiple-choice questions can be more problematic than yes/no questions, especially after a delay, and (b) younger children are more suggestible than older children, particularly when asked "no" and "absent feature" questions. The findings are discussed with respect to implications for interviewing children.

Phillips, E., Oxburgh, G., Gavin, A., & Myklebust, T. (2012). Investigative interviews with victims of child sexual abuse: The relationship between question type and investigation relevant information. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 27(1), 45-54.

This study examined the influence of question type during investigative interviews with victims of child sexual abuse on the number of items of Investigation Relevant Information (IRI) obtained during the interview. Twenty-one police interview transcripts from an English police force were analysed across different age groups. As predicted, more IRI was elicited from appropriate



questions (e.g., open, probing, and encouragers) than from inappropriate questions (e.g., echo probes, closed, forced choice, leading, multiple and opinion/statement). Also as predicted, the number of items of IRI elicited increased with the age of the child witness, with older children disclosing the most items of IRI, regardless of whether the abuse was recent or historic.

La Rooy, D., & Lamb, M. E. (2011). What happens when interviewers ask repeated questions in forensic interviews with children alleging abuse?. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 26(1), 20-25.

This study was designed to explore 1) the ways in which interviewers refocus alleged victims of abuse on their previous responses and 2) how children responded when they were refocused on their previous responses. Transcripts of 37 forensic interviews conducted by British police officers trained using the best practices spelled out in the *Memorandum of Good Practice* were examined. The instances in which interviewers asked repeated questions were isolated and coded into categories with respect to the *reasons* why interviewers needed to ask the repeated question (i.e., there was no apparent reason, to challenge a child's response, clarification, no answer the first time the question was asked, digression, or compound question). The children's *responses* to the repeated questions were further categorised into mutually exclusive categories (i.e., elaboration, repetition, contradiction, or no answer). On average interviewers asked children 8 repeated questions per interview. Most of the time interviewers asked repeated questions to challenge a previous response (62%), but they were also sometimes asked for no apparent reason (20%). Children repeated previous responses or elaborated on a previous response 81% of the time and contradicted themselves 7% of the time when re-asked the same question. We conclude that children did not appear unduly pressured to change their answers, and, more importantly, did not contradict themselves when interviewers attempted to refocus them on particular responses.

Snider, S. M., & Everson, M.D. (2011). What is my next question? *APSAC Alert*, 11(4), 1-14.

Feltis, B. B., Powell, M. B., Snow, P. C., & Hughes-Scholes, C. H. (2010). An examination of the association between interviewer question type and story-grammar detail in child witness interviews about abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34(6), 407-413.

This study compared the effects of open-ended versus specific questions, and various types of open-ended questions, in eliciting story-grammar detail in child abuse interviews. The sample included 34 police interviews with child witnesses aged 5–15 years (M age = 9 years, 9 months). The interviewers' questions and their relative sub-types were classified according to definitions reported in the child interview training literature. The children's responses were classified according to the proportion of story grammar and the prevalence of individual story grammar elements as defined by Stein and Glenn (1979). Open-ended questions were more effective at eliciting story grammar than specific questions. This finding was revealed across three age groups, two interview phases and irrespective of how question effectiveness was measured. However, not all types of open ended questions were equally effective. Open-ended questions that encouraged a broad response, or asked the child to elaborate on a part of their account, elicited more story-grammar detail compared to open-ended questions that requested clarification of concepts or descriptions of the next (or another) activity or detail within a sequence. This study demonstrates that children's ability to provide story-grammar detail is maximised when there is minimal prompting from the interviewer. Given the association between story grammar production and victim credibility, greater guidance is warranted in interviewer training programs in relation to the effects and administration of different types of open-ended questions.

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Lyon, T. D. (2010). Investigative interviewing of the child. In D.N. Duquette & A.M. Haralambie (Eds.) *Child Welfare Law and Practice* (2d Ed.). Denver, CO: Bradford.

Recently, researchers have turned their attention to finding means of questioning children that maximize productivity while avoiding suggestiveness. These researchers have demonstrated that children, if questioned in a supportive manner, are capable of providing enormous amounts of productive information in response to open-ended questions. The irony is that many direct and suggestive methods once thought necessary to overcome abused children's reluctance to disclose abuse have been found counterproductive in two ways: they minimize the number of details in true

allegations at the same time that they increase the risk of false allegations. If children are questioned suboptimally, it is more difficult to distinguish true from false reports. This chapter will emphasize how the research on child interviewing can help attorneys better question children.

Cederborg, A. 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.

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.

Krähenbühl, S., Blades, M., & Eiser, C. (2009). The effect of repeated questioning on children's accuracy and consistency in eyewitness testimony. *Legal and Criminological Psychology, 14*(2), 263-278.

In police interviews children may be asked the same question many times. We investigated how the number of repetitions and the interval between those repetitions affected the accuracy and consistency of children's responses. 156 children aged 4–9 years watched a staged event and were

interviewed individually 1 week later. Children were asked eight open-ended questions, which were each repeated a further four times (making a total of forty questions). Half these open-ended questions could be answered from information in the event, and half were unanswerable (so children should have said 'don't know' in response to these questions). The questions were repeated in gist form. The interval between an initial question and its repetitions was varied by use of other questions and twenty non-repeated filler questions. The intervals between repetitions were immediate repetition, repetition after a delay of three intervening questions, after a delay of six intervening questions, and after ten or more intervening questions. Over a quarter of children's responses to repeated questions changed, usually resulting in a decline in accuracy, particularly after the first repetition. Subsequently, the number of repetitions and delay interval had little effect on responses to answerable questions although accuracy to unanswerable questions continued to decline. Question repetition had a negative affect on children's consistency and accuracy. For unanswerable questions in particular, the more often a question was repeated the more likely children were to invent a response.

Melinder, A., & Gilstrap, L. L. (2009). The relationships between child and forensic interviewer behaviours and individual differences in interviews about a medical examination. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 6(3), 365-395.

This study examined the interviewing process between professional forensic interviewers and their "mock" child witness. Fifty-eight preschool children participated in a medical examination, and were later interviewed by an experienced forensic interviewer ( $n = 15$ ) about this event. Interviews were coded with mutually exclusive and exhaustive coding schemes that captured interviewers and child behaviours in a temporally organized manner. To evaluate the relationship between interviewers' and children's individual differences measured prior to the interview and the interview outcomes (i.e., questions asked, child interview behaviour), all child participants were tested with relevant cognitive and behavioural measures, and all adult interviewers were tested with personality measures. Results showed that leading questions were more often followed by simple assents and denial than expected. Interviewers did not remain consistent from question to subsequent question, but children's response type was predictable from response to subsequent response. Children's and adults' individual differences measured prior to the interview predicted

some of the adults' interviewing behaviours and some of children's own response behaviours during the interview. Mediation modelling evinced that more self-controlled interviewers posed more recommended questions and elicited more assents with details from the children. We discuss the results in relation to established views of recommended interview practice and to theories of suggestibility.

Myklebust, T., & Bjørklund, R. A. (2009). The child verbal competence effect in court: A comparative study of field investigative interviews of children in child sexual abuse cases. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 6(2), 117-128.

The purpose of this study is to compare field investigative interviews of children (FIIC) with three different legal outcomes in child sexual abuse cases: (i) insufficient evidence to proceed (IEP); (ii) convictions; or (iii) acquittals by the court. One hundred FIIC were divided into one of the three outcome possibilities. Amongst the female interviewees older than 10 years, there were no cases of acquittals and the convicted cases were over-represented. The children's response to open questions was found to be the main difference between the three FIIC outcomes. The responses to these open questions were 1.9 and 2.3 times longer in the convicted cases compared to acquittals and IEP. Possible explanations for the result are discussed. Copyright © 2009 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Snow, P. C., Powell, M. B., & Murfett, R. (2009). Getting the story from child witnesses: Exploring the application of a story grammar framework. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 15(6), 555-568.

Investigative interviews with children about alleged abuse were analysed to determine the degree to which the child's responses adhered to a story grammar framework, and whether the presence of story grammar elements was associated with interviewers' adherence to best-practice (i.e. open-ended) questioning. The sample included 51 interviews with child witnesses from across Australia. The interviews were administered by a police officer with children (37 girls and 14 boys) aged 316 years (M age 103.82 months, SD 34.21 months). The interviewers' questions were categorised as open-ended or specific and the children's responses were classified as a story grammar element, context/background information, or 'don't know' responses. The majority of interviewer questions

were specific in nature and the majority of children's responses were context/background details. Open-ended questions were more successful in eliciting story grammar from children. Of the story grammar elements, the interviewers' specific questions usually targeted setting and attempt details. These findings suggest that improvement in the narrative coherence of children's reports of abusive events can potentially be achieved by increasing interviewers' use of open-ended questions.

Thoresen, C., Lønnum, K., Melinder, A., & Magnussen, S. (2009). Forensic interviews with children in CSA cases: A large-sample study of Norwegian police interviews. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 23(7), 999-1011.

The study was designed to investigate changes in how children are interviewed in cases of child sexual abuse over a fairly long period of time. The interviewers' utterances were analysed in a large sample of forensic interviews conducted in Norway during the period of 1990–2002. The results indicate that interviewer strategies have improved during this period; there is a decrease in the proportion of suggestive, yes/no and option-posing utterances, accompanied by a comparable increase in directive utterances. However, the frequency of open-ended utterances is low, and has not changed much over time. An index of the overall quality of the interviews likewise showed a positive trend, with an increase in the proportion of interviews that were labelled 'good'. However, even in recent years, interviews rated as 'inadequate' or 'poor' constituted half of the interviews conducted. Copyright © 2008 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Dion, J., & Cyr, M. (2008). The use of the NICHD protocol to enhance the quantity of details obtained from children with low verbal abilities in investigative interviews: A pilot study. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 17(2), 144-162.

This study explored the impact of the NICHD protocol to enhance the quantity and content of details reported by children with low verbal abilities. Thirty-four children aged from 6 to 14 were interviewed following their experience of sexual abuse. Half the interviews were conducted using the NICHD protocol. Results indicate that NICHD interviews contained more open-ended prompts and more details overall. Open-ended invitations yielded significantly more detailed responses than did closed-ended questions for both children with low and average verbal abilities. Although

children with low verbal abilities provided fewer details than children with average verbal abilities, the NICHD protocol helped them provide detailed responses containing the core elements of the sexual abuse.

Hershkowitz, I. (2008). Socioemotional factors in child sexual abuse investigations. *Child Maltreatment, 14*(2), 172-181.

Two socioemotional factors were explored in association with children's production of forensic information during sexual abuse investigations: rapport building and interviewer's support. The study tested to what extent (a) the length and questioning style in the rapport-building session and (b) the level of support interviewers provided to the children, were associated with the amount of forensic details children provided in their investigation. These associations were explored for more talkative and less talkative children as well as for children of two age groups (4-6 and 7-9 years). A total of 71 forensic interviews of alleged victims of child sexual abuse were subject to a detailed psycholinguistic analysis. Results suggest that richer information in the child's responses is associated with a short and open style rapport-building session as well as with a higher level of interviewer's support. This association is especially marked for less talkative children who might be in special need of support and for whom the rapport with the interviewer might be more meaningful.

Korkman, J., Santtila, P., Westeråker, M., & Sandnabba, N. K. (2008). Interviewing techniques and follow-up questions in child sexual abuse interviews. *European Journal of Developmental Psychology, 5*(1), 108-128.

The quality of a representative sample of 43 forensic interviews with alleged victims (aged 3 – 8 years) of child sexual abuse (CSA) in Finland was investigated. Interviews were coded for type of interviewer utterance, type of child response, details in the child response and number of words in each utterance. Option-posing, specific suggestive and unspecific suggestive question types comprised almost 50% of all interviewer utterances. The interviewers continued to rely on leading and suggestive questions even after the child had provided significant information, i.e., interviewers failed to follow-up information provided by the child in an adequate way. Longer questions (in number of words) often rendered no reply from the child, whereas shorter questions

rendered descriptive answers. Interviewers seemed to fail in discussing the topic of sexual abuse in an appropriate way, frequently employing long and vague unspecific suggestive utterances.

Kulkofsky, S., Wang, Q., & Ceci, S. J. (2008). Do better stories make better memories? Narrative quality and memory accuracy in preschool children. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 22(1), 21-38.

The present study examines how the quality of children's narratives relates to the accuracy of those narratives. Sixty-one 3- to 5-year-olds played a novel game with a researcher in their schools. Children were questioned in an interview that included an open-ended free recall prompt followed by a series of directed questions. Children's narratives were coded for volume, complexity and cohesion as well as for accuracy. Correlational results showed that overall, narrative skills enable the reporting of more information, while decreasing the proportion of information that was accurate. These results appeared to be driven by a quantity-accuracy trade-off; in an ensuing regression analysis with all narrative variables entered into the model, volume was associated with decreases in accuracy while narrative cohesion was associated with increases in accuracy. We discuss the results in terms of their relationship to the development of autobiographical memory as well as implications for forensic contexts. Copyright © 2007 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Okanda, M., & Itakura, S. (2008). Children in Asian cultures say yes to yes—no questions: Common and cultural differences between Vietnamese and Japanese children. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 32(2), 131-136.

We investigated whether children's response tendency toward yes-no questions concerning objects is a common phenomenon regardless of languages and cultures. Vietnamese and Japanese 2- to 5-year-old ( $N = 108$ ) were investigated. We also examined whether familiarity with the questioning issue has any effect on Asian children's yes bias. As the result, Asian children showed a yes bias to yes-no questions. The children's response tendency changes dramatically with their age: Vietnamese and Japanese 2- and 3-year-olds showed a yes bias, but 5-year-olds did not. However, Asian 4-year-olds also showed a yes bias only in the familiar condition. Also, Asian children showed a stronger yes bias in the familiar condition than the unfamiliar condition. These two findings in Asian children were different from the previous finding investigated North



American children (Fritzley & Lee, 2003). Moreover, there was a within-Asian cross-cultural difference. Japanese children showed different response tendencies, which were rarely observed in Vietnamese children. Japanese 2-year-olds and some 3-year-olds showed a “no answer” response: they tended not to respond to an interviewer’s questions. Japanese 4- and 5-year-olds also showed an “I don’t know” response when they were asked about unfamiliar objects. Japanese children tended to avoid a binary decision. We discussed the cross-cultural differences.

Cheung, M. (2007). Promoting effective interviewing of sexually abused children: A pilot study. *Research on Social Work Practice, 18*(2), 137-143.

This study is centered on interviewing techniques with alleged child sexual abuse victims who do and do not disclose sexual abuse. Method: Ninety randomly selected videotapes are reviewed, and the interviewing techniques are recorded on a 69-item Child Sexual Abuse Interviewing Skills Instrument. Results: The nondisclosure children are younger and more likely to be males than females. The discriminant analysis of the instrument indicate the use of more “what and how” questions in disclosure cases, whereas more closing questions are used in nondisclosure cases. Conclusions: Interviewers should maintain an attitude that additional information can be obtained from other sources, which will help the interviewer demonstrate patience and understanding, rather than leading the child to disclosure or false allegation.

Lamb, M. E., Orbach, Y., Hershkowitz, I., Horowitz, D., & Abbott, C. B. (2007). Does the type of prompt affect the accuracy of information provided by alleged victims of abuse in forensic interviews?. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 21*(9), 1117-1130.

43 victims of sexual abuse averaging 9.78 years of age and the 52 youths who admitted abusing them were interviewed about the abusive incidents. Forensically relevant details provided by the victims were categorized as confirmed, contradicted, or ignored by the perpetrators. Most (60%) of the details were ignored, but details were more likely to be confirmed when they were elicited using invitations (open-ended free-recall prompts) rather than other more focused prompts. Similar effects were not evident with respect to contradictions, however. The results support predictions that information elicited using free-recall prompts is more likely to be accurate than information elicited using other types of prompts. Copyright © 2007 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Powell, M. B., & Snow, P. C. (2007). Guide to questioning children during the free-narrative phase of an investigative interview. *Australian Psychologist*, 42(1), 57-65.

The inability of professionals to maintain the use of open-ended questions in the free-narrative phase of investigative interviews with children has been a major problem around the globe. The current paper addresses this concern by describing the key principles underlying the elicitation of free-narrative accounts and practical suggestions for formulating questions. The paper focuses on interviewing children in the early- and middle-childhood years and commences with a definition of the term “free-narrative account” and a description of how such accounts typically develop in children. A description is then provided of the four key characteristics of a good question in the free-narrative interview phase. These include (a) simple language, (b) absence of specific details or coercive techniques, (c) flexibility on the part of the interviewee to choose what details will be reported, and (d) encouragement of an elaborate response. Finally, the process of eliciting a narrative account is briefly described, including examples of questions that adhere to the four characteristics listed above.

Quas, J. A., Davis, E. L., Goodman, G. S., & Myers, J. E. (2007). Repeated questions, deception, and children’s true and false reports of body touch. *Child Maltreatment*, 12(1), 60-67.

Four- to 7-year-olds’ ability to answer repeated questions about body touch either honestly or dishonestly was examined. Children experienced a play event, during which one third of the children were touched innocuously. Two weeks later, they returned for a memory interview. Some children who had not been touched were instructed to lie during the interview and say that they had been touched. Children so instructed were consistent in maintaining the lie but performed poorly when answering repeated questions unrelated to the lie. Children who were not touched and told the truth were accurate when answering repeated questions. Of note, children who had been touched and told the truth were the most inconsistent. Results call into question the common assumption that consistency is a useful indicator of veracity in children’s eyewitness accounts.

Guadagno, B. L., Powell, M. B., & Wright, R. (2006). Police officers' and legal professionals' perceptions regarding how children are, and should be, questioned about repeated abuse. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 13(2), 251-260.

This study explored the perceptions of police officers and legal professionals (i.e., prosecutors, defence lawyers and a judge) about (a) what particularisation is, (b) the type of information that is required for particularisation to occur, and (c) how particularisation is best achieved in cases of repeated child abuse. The professionals' perceptions (all experts in this area) were elicited via individual in-depth semi-structured interviews. While all participants acknowledged the importance of particularisation, the views of the police officers varied in several important ways to those of the other professionals. Overall, the police officers perceived that highly specific details (such as the location, date and time of the offence) are essential for particularisation to occur, and that maximising the number of separate offences and specific details about each offence increases the chance of successful prosecution. In contrast, the legal professionals perceived that the primacy goal of the police officers should be to elicit a free-narrative account of one or more offences. A high proportion of specific questions was perceived to negatively impact on the child's credibility by contaminating the evidence. The implications of these findings are discussed.

Korkman, J., Santtila, P., & Sandnabba, N. K. (2006). Dynamics of verbal interaction between interviewer and child in interviews with alleged victims of child sexual abuse. *Scandinavia Journal of Psychology*, 47(2), 109-119.

A number ( $n= 27$ ) of investigative interviews with children were analyzed with a view to explore the verbal dynamics between interviewer and child. Different types of interviewer utterances and child responses were defined, and the interrelationships between these were explored. The effectiveness of different interviewer utterances in eliciting information from children as well as the type of utterance the interviewer used to follow up an informative answer by the child were investigated. *Option-posing* and *suggestive utterances* made up for more than 50% of interviewer utterances, the proportion of *invitations* being only 2%. *Invitations* and *directive utterances* were associated with an increase in informative responses by the child, the adverse being true for *option-posing* and *suggestive utterances*. Interestingly, even after the child had provided an informative answer, interviewers continued to rely on focused and leading interviewing methods – in spite of a slight improvement in interviewing behavior.

Krähenbühl, S., & Blades, M. (2006). The effect of interviewing techniques on young children's responses to questions. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 32(3), 321-331.

Research into the effect of interviewing techniques has been predominantly within the paradigm of eyewitness testimony. This review focuses on the issues of questioning and examines whether children's responses are affected by questioning techniques, and whether these effects are generic to all interviewing contexts. Systematic literature searches were used to identify areas of concern and current findings in research on interviewing young children (aged 4–12). The style and wording of questioning can affect children's responses and accuracy positively and negatively. These effects were especially apparent in interviews with the youngest children. The implications of these findings are relevant in all contexts where an adult questions a child. It has been demonstrated that interviewing techniques can affect responses from children and that it is therefore imperative that interviewers are aware of, understand and control their influence in order to elicit complete, accurate and reliable information from the child.

Wright, R., & Powell, M. B. (2006). Investigative interviewers' perceptions of their difficulty in adhering to open-ended questions with child witnesses. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, 8(4), 316-325.

Best practice guidelines for conducting investigative interviews of children emphasise the importance of obtaining free narrative accounts with the use of open-ended questions. However, research indicates that most investigative interviewers underutilise open-ended questions, even following intensive training in their use. The aim of the current study was to explore investigative interviewers' perceptions of their difficulty in asking open-ended questions. During a training course on how to use open-ended questions, eight child abuse investigators were individually interviewed about why they had asked specific questions in a 10-minute mock interview conducted immediately earlier with a school child. Overall, three reasons were identified. These related to: 1. The specificity of the information required from children; 2. the unfamiliar nature of the open-ended discourse style; and 3. the complex distinction between open-ended versus specific questions. Each of these themes is discussed, along with the implications for trainers and researchers in child investigative interviewing.

Cordón, I. M., Saetermoe, C. L., & Goodman, G. S. (2005). Facilitating children's accurate responses: Conversational rules and interview style. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 19*(3), 249-266.

This study examined the effectiveness of teaching young children a set of social conversational rules as a method of reducing errors in children's memory reports. Forty children (aged 3 to 6 years) interacted with a confederate 'teaching assistant.' Three conversational rules were examined as possible means of decreasing inaccuracies. For comparison purposes, three placebo rules were also developed. To test the limitations of teaching young children a set of conversational rules, three interview styles (neutral, repetitive, accusatory) were used. Results indicated that children who received all three target rules provided a smaller proportion of incorrect responses than did children who received fewer target rules or than children in a placebo control group, regardless of interview style. Theoretical and applied issues are discussed. Copyright © 2005 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Gilstrap, L. L., & Ceci, S. J. (2005). Reconceptualizing children's suggestibility: Bidirectional and temporal properties. *Child Development, 76*(1), 40-53.

Forty-one children (3 to 7 years) were exposed to a staged event and later interviewed by 1 of 41 professional interviewers. All interviews were coded with a detailed, mutually exclusive, and exhaustive coding scheme capturing adult behaviors (leading questions vs. neutral) and child behaviors (acquiescence vs. denial) in a temporally organized manner. Overall, interviewers' use of leading questions did not result in increased acquiescence as previously found. However, one specific type of leading question (i.e., inaccurate misleading) was followed by acquiescence. Lagged sequential analyses showed that it was possible to predict directly from child-to-child behavior, effectively skipping the intervening adult behavior. This result raises questions about the current conceptualization that suggestibility is driven by adult behaviors.

Gilstrap, L. L., & Papierno, P. B. (2004). Is the cart pushing the horse? The effects of child characteristics on children's and adults' interview behaviours. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 18*(8), 1059-1078.

In the current study we examine the influence of child individual differences on children's and adults' behaviours in unstructured forensic interviews. Thirty-eight interviews conducted by actual forensic interviewers with 3- to 7-year-old children were analysed for child reporting behaviours (assent, denial, acquiescence, accurate and inaccurate details, verbosity and cooperation) and adult behaviours (leading vs. neutral questions). Consistent with our predictions, child individual differences that were visible (marked, e.g. sociability) more often predicted child and adult behaviours than those that were not as apparent (unmarked, e.g. source monitoring). In addition to direct influences of the child individual differences on child behaviours, for some variables the influence of the child individual difference was mediated by differential responses by an interviewer (i.e. indirect effects) which then, in turn, influence the child. The ability to examine indirect influences by using unstructured interviews is emphasized. Copyright # 2004 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Howie, P., Sheehan, M., Mojarrad, T., & Wrzesinska, M. (2004). 'Undesirable' and 'desirable' shifts in children's responses to repeated questions: age differences in the effect of providing a rationale for repetition. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 18*(9), 1161-1180.

This study examined factors influencing children's tendency to shift responses when questions are repeated within an interview. Forty-nine 4–5-year-olds and 40 7–8-year-olds were questioned about a video they had seen, with questions repeated by the same or a different interviewer. Half the children were given a rationale for question repetition, and half were not. Overall, the older children shifted less than the younger children, and, unlike the younger children, more to misleading than unbiased questions. The rationale did not affect overall shifting, but reduced the probability of 'undesirable' shifts (towards inaccuracy) in the younger children, and increased 'desirable' shifts (towards accuracy) at both ages. In the younger children, the rationale reduced total number of shifts, but only with the same interviewer, while in the older children the reverse applied. The results suggest developmental progression in the relative contributions of memorial

and social/motivational factors to shifting. Implications for investigative interviewing with children are discussed. Copyright © 2004 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd

Roberts, K. P., Lamb, M. E., & Sternberg, K. J. (2004). The effects of rapport-building style on children's reports of a staged event. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 18*(2), 189-202.

Three- to nine-year-old children ( $n=144$ ) interacted with a photographer and were interviewed about the event either a week or a month later. The informativeness and accuracy of information provided following either open-ended or direct rapport building were compared. Children in the open-ended rapport-building condition provided more accurate reports than children in the direct rapport-building condition after both short and long delays. Open-ended rapport-building led the three- to four-year-olds to report more errors in response to the first recall question about the event, but they went on to provide more accurate reports in the rest of the interview than counterparts in the direct rapport-building condition. These results suggest that forensic interviewers should attempt to establish rapport with children using an open-ended style. Published in 2004 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Waterman, A. H., Blades, M., & Spencer, C. (2004). Indicating when you do not know the answer: The effect of question format and interviewer knowledge on children's 'don't know' responses. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 22*(3), 335-348.

Children are interviewed in a variety of contexts, for example, in the legal setting and in experimental research. In these situations, it is often very important that children indicate when they do not know the answer to a question, rather than guess. In the present experiment, one hundred and forty-nine 5- to 9-year-olds witnessed a staged event in one of two conditions. The interviewer was either present at the event (knowledgeable interviewer) or absent from the event (uninformed interviewer). Children were then interviewed using yes/no questions and wh-questions. Within each type of question, half were answerable based on the information provided; the other half were not answerable (i. e. the correct answer was 'don't know'). The children performed consistently well with the answerable questions. With the unanswerable questions, there was an effect of format and interviewer knowledge. Children were more likely correctly to indicate that they did not know the answer to an unanswerable wh-question than an unanswerable yes/no

question. Also, children were more likely correctly to say ‘don't know’ to unanswerable questions when the interviewer had been absent from the event.

Westcott, H. L., & Kynan, S. (2004). The application of a ‘story-telling’ framework to investigative interviews for suspected child sexual abuse. *Legal and Criminological Psychology, 9*(1), 37-56.

This study investigated the usefulness of a ‘story-telling’ approach to understanding investigative interviews with children suspected of being sexually abused. An innovative framework for understanding children's allegations of sexual abuse was devised from the ‘story-telling’ literature, which examined the degree to which essential elements of a story, as well as order or disorder of narrative, were present in accounts of alleged abuse. Other features of the interview, such as the presence of free narrative, reliance on specific questions to elicit an account and bizarre or ‘off-topic’ responses from the child, were also recorded. Transcripts of 70 interviews with children aged up to 12 years, from England and Wales, were coded using a scheme devised specifically for the purpose of the study. The results suggest that although, superficially, the accounts adhered to a story structure, they were often incomplete, ambiguous and disordered to a degree which would impact on understanding. Reliance on specific questions, and other digressionary or non verbal responses from the child also compounded difficulties. Age differences in responding were noted, with the youngest children responding differently from their older peers. Implications for practice include the importance of careful questioning and the value of a second interviewer monitoring the interview. The story-telling framework was a useful tool in suggesting where difficulties may arise for the child in presenting his/her account, and for an observer (e.g. juror) in making sense of the child's experience as elicited in the interview.

Brown, D., & Pipe, M. E. (2003). Variations on a technique: Enhancing children's recall using narrative elaboration training. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 17*(4), 377-399.

The current study examined first, whether the positive effects demonstrated by the Narrative Elaboration Technique (NET) could be further enhanced when coupled with mental reinstatement of context (MR), prior to interview, and second, compared the efficacy of the NET at a two-week delay and a nine-month delay. In Study 1, 47 children took part as a class in a staged event about



safety. Two weeks later they received a single training session, and the following day were interviewed with either the NET ( $n = 16$ ), NET + MR ( $n = 17$ ), or in a control condition ( $n = 14$ ). Children trained with the NET reported approximately twice as much correct information, and were more accurate, than a control group who did not receive NET training, although the combination of the NET + MR did not result in a further significant enhancement of recall. In Study 2, 22 children took part in the safety event, and nine months later received a single training session, and were interviewed the following day with either the NET ( $n = 11$ ), or in a control condition ( $n = 11$ ). Children who received the NET training reported more correct information than those who did not. The practical applications of the NET and its variations are discussed. Copyright © 2003 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd

Heather Fritzley, V., & Lee, K. (2003). Do young children always say yes to yes–no questions? A metadevelopmental study of the affirmation bias. *Child Development*, 74(5), 1297-1313.

The present study investigated whether yes–no questions would lead to a yes bias in young children. Four experiments were conducted in which 2- to 5-year-olds were asked comprehensible and incomprehensible yes–no questions concerning familiar and unfamiliar objects. Consistent findings were obtained: (a) 2-year-olds displayed a consistent yes bias; (b) 4- and 5-year-olds exhibited no response bias toward comprehensible questions and a nay-saying bias toward incomprehensible questions; and (c) 3-year-olds' results were mixed, suggesting that the age of 3 years is a period of developmental transition in response tendency toward yes–no questions. The findings suggest that yes–no questions are suitable for older children, providing they are comprehensible, but may result in biased results when used with younger children and when incomprehensible.

Lamb, M. E., Sternberg, K. J., Orbach, Y., Esplin, P. W., Stewart, H., & Mitchell, S. (2003). Age differences in young children's responses to open-ended invitations in the course of forensic interviews. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 71*(5), 926-934.

To elucidate age differences in responses to free-recall prompts (i.e., invitations and cued invitations) and focused recognition prompts (i.e., option-posing and suggestive utterances), the authors examined 130 forensic interviews of 4- to 8-year-old alleged victims of sexual abuse. There were age differences in the total number of details elicited as well as in the number of details elicited using each of the different types of prompts, especially invitations. More details were elicited from older than from younger children in response to all types of prompts, but there were no age differences in the proportion of details (about 50%) elicited using invitations. Cued invitations elicited 18% of the total details, and the number of details elicited using cued invitations increased with age. Action-based cues consistently elicited more details than other types of cues. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2012 APA, all rights reserved).

Milne, R., & Bull, R. (2003). Does the cognitive interview help children to resist the effects of suggestive questioning?. *Legal and Criminological Psychology, 8*(1), 21-38.

The CI, which was initially developed in the United States by Geiselman and Fisher, aims to increase the quantity and quality of information elicited from cooperative witnesses, victims, and suspects. CI techniques are designed to improve memory retrieval and dyadic communication. The objectives of the study reported in this article were to determine whether the CI would enhance event recall when used with children; which categories of event recall might be affected; and from where in the interview any CI effect stemmed. The second set of objectives involved determining whether the CI increased the resistance of children to suggestive questions and whether scripts had a role in susceptibility to suggestion. The study methodology involved showing 84 children 8- to 10-years-old a video recording of a magic show. A day later they were interviewed individually by using either the CI or a structured interview. A predetermined list of suggestive questions was also administered to the children either before or after being interviewed. The study found that those children interviewed with CI techniques recalled significantly more correct details about persons and actions, with no increase in the reporting of erroneous information. These effects were found to stem from the questioning phase of the CI. In addition, those children interviewed with

CI techniques were more resistant to subsequent suggestive questions, especially misleading script-consistent questions. 3 tables, 49 references, and appended listing of CI and structured interviewing techniques and a predetermined list of questions.

DeVoe, E. R., & Faller, K. C. (2002). Question strategies in interviews with children who may have been sexually abused. *Child Welfare: Journal of Policy, Practice, and Program*, 81(1), 5-31.

This article examines the number and types of questions employed in clinical and computer-assisted interviews with children referred for sexual abuse evaluation. This research was part of a larger study to assess the efficacy of a computer-assisted protocol in the evaluation of child sexual abuse allegations. Interviews of 47 girls and 29 boys, ages 5 to 10 years, referred to a multidisciplinary clinic for sexual abuse assessment, were analyzed. A coding system was developed from interview transcripts. Nine types of questions were defined. Results indicate that during the initial interview children were asked an average of 195 questions ( $SD = 92$ ) and that more than 85% of interviewer queries were open-ended. The majority of children who disclosed did so in response to focused questions. Findings suggest that many children are able to describe sexual abuse with careful questioning that includes nonleading but focused inquiry. Implications for practice and interviewing guidelines are discussed.

Lyon, T. D. (2002). Applying suggestibility research to the real world: The case of repeated questions. *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 65(1), 97-126.

One can discern two parallel trends in the law and the psychology of child witnesses. In the law, appellate courts are beginning to stem the once powerful movement to increase the acceptance of children's testimony and the admissibility of children's out-of-court statements. Lyon analyzes particular strands of each trend.

Walker, N. E. (2002). Forensic interviews of children: The components of scientific validity and legal admissibility. *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 149-178.

Focuses on the high-quality forensic interviewing of children in the United States. Difference between forensic and therapeutic interviews; Relevance of forensic assessment to issues at bar and materiality to the case; Reliance of jurisdictions on different legal standards for evaluating the admissibility of evidence.

Hershkowitz, I. (2001). Children's responses to open-ended utterances in investigative interviews. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 6(1), 49-63.

Fifty 4- to 13-year-olds were interviewed about incidents of sexual abuse that they had allegedly experienced. The interviewers employed an unusually high number of open-ended prompts, and the analyses focused on the effectiveness of different types of open-ended inquiries. Open-ended prompts yielded significantly longer and more detailed responses than did focused prompts. The main invitation, which initiated the children's narratives, elicited the longest and most detailed responses. Invitations remained superior to focused questions throughout the interview. The effectiveness of invitations did not vary depending on whether they followed focused or open ended prompts. There were no age differences in the effectiveness of any types of invitations.

Lamb, M. E., & Fauchier, A. (2001). The effects of question type on self-contradictions by children in the course of forensic interviews. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 15(5), 483-491.

Twenty-four forensic interviews of seven alleged victims of child sexual abuse were examined to elucidate the circumstances in which the children contradicted forensically relevant details they had provided earlier. Suggestive questions by the interviewers elicited a disproportionate number of contradictions, whereas open-ended invitations never elicited contradictions. Because contradictions necessarily imply that details were stated inaccurately at least once, these close analyses of forensic interviews demonstrate that, as in analogue contexts, open-ended prompts yield more accurate information than do focused questions, particularly option-posing and suggestive prompts. Published in 2001 by John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Lyon, T. D. (2001). Speaking with children: Advice from investigative interviewers. In F. Talley (Ed.), *Handbook for The Treatment of Abused and Neglected Children* (pp.65-82). Binghamton, NY: Haworth.

Waterman, A. H., Blades, M., & Spencer, C. (2001). Interviewing children and adults: The effect of question format on the tendency to speculate. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, *15*(5), 521-531.

In formal interviews it is important that interviewees indicate when they do not know the answer, rather than speculate. In this study we investigated whether question format affected the tendency to speculate. One hundred and twenty-eight 5- to 9-year-olds, and 23 adults, were told two short stories, and were then asked questions about the stories. Half of the questions were answerable based on the information provided; the other half were not answerable. Within these categories, half of the questions were closed questions (i.e. only required a yes/no response), and half were wh-questions (i.e. requested particular details to be provided). All participants performed at ceiling with the answerable questions. With the unanswerable questions, there was an effect of format. The majority of children and adults correctly indicated that they did not know the answer when asked unanswerable wh-questions. However, the majority of children, and just over one-fifth of adults, provided a response (i.e. 'yes' or 'no') to the closed unanswerable questions. The implications for interviews, particularly within a forensic context, are discussed. Copyright © 2001 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Cederborg, A. C., Orbach, Y., Sternberg, K. J., & Lamb, M. E. (2000). Investigative interviews of child witnesses in Sweden. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *24*(10), 1355-1361.

The objective was to evaluate the structure and informativeness of interviews with 4- to 13-year-old alleged victims of sexual abuse in Sweden. Seventy-two alleged victims of sexual abuse were interviewed by six experienced officers from one police district in Sweden. Our evaluation focused on the structure of the interviews, the distribution and timing of the investigators' utterance types, and the quantity and quality of the information provided by the children. Content analysis revealed that the interviewers relied primarily on option-posing and suggestive questions—together, these comprised 53% of their utterances—when interviewing the alleged victims. As a result, most of

the details (57%) obtained from the children were elicited by option-posing and suggestive utterances. Only 6% of the interviewers' utterances were open-ended invitations, and these elicited only 8% of the information obtained. The reliance on option-posing and suggestive prompts may have reduced the accuracy of the information obtained, thereby interfering with the investigations, and reducing the forensic admissibility of the children's statements. This suggests a continuing need in Sweden, as in other countries, for interview practices that enhance the quality of information provided by young victims.

Craig, R. A., Scheibe, R., Raskin, D. C., Kircher, J. C., & Dodd, D. H. (1999). Interviewer questions and content analysis of children's statements of sexual abuse. *Applied Developmental Science, 3*(2), 77-85.

Effects of forensic interview techniques on the production of free-narrative and Criteria-Based Content Analysis (CBCA) criteria were assessed in police interviews with 48 children (ages 3 to 16) who alleged they had been sexually abused. These allegations were later categorized as confirmed (n = 35) or highly doubtful (n = 13) based on information obtained independent of the statements. Two raters independently coded all interviewer utterances and children's responses, and four other raters evaluated the transcripts for the presence of CBCA content criteria. As predicted, open questions yielded more free narrative and CBCA criteria than other types of questions. Confirmed statements of abuse contained more CBCA criteria than highly doubtful statements, and statements made by older children contained more CBCA criteria than those by younger children. The results support the use of open questions for eliciting free narrative and the use of CBCA to assess the validity of children's allegations of sexual abuse.

Gee, S., Gregory, M., & Pipe, M. E. (1999). 'What colour is your pet dinosaur?' The impact of pre-interview training and question type on children's answers. *Legal and Criminological Psychology, 4*(1), 111-128.

Two studies evaluated the effects of question type and of brief pre-interview training, involving instructions and practice, on the number of correct answers and errors given by children in a structured interview. A total of 157 children aged from nine to 13 were interviewed about a visit to a science centre with both misleading and non-misleading open and closed questions. The

children also rated their confidence in each of their answers. Half the children received pre-interview training designed to discourage compliance and guessing. In Study 1 pre-interview training decreased commission errors to misleading questions, but also decreased the number of correct responses to non-misleading questions. In Study 2 a revised training package decreased errors for misleading questions without impacting on correct responses. Brief pre-interview interventions can reduce children's compliance with misleading questions in experimental situations. Both studies provided some support for the cognitive processing hypothesis that the confidence-accuracy relationship will be stronger for open than for closed questions.

Peterson, C., Dowden, C., & Tobin, J. (1999). Interviewing preschoolers: Comparisons of yes/no and wh-questions. *Law and Human Behavior, 23*(5), 539-555.

This study investigated the influence of question format on preschool-aged children's errors, their response accuracy, and their tendency to say "I don't know" when given non-misleading questions in a neutral, unbiased context. Children (3 to 5 years old) participated in a craft-making session that included a staged "accident" with two experimenters differing in gender and appearance; the environment also had several distinctive features. One week later children were interviewed about actions, participants, and environment; questions were yes/no format with the veridical response "yes" ("yes" questions), yes/no format with the veridical response "no" ("no" questions), and specific wh- format questions. Question format substantially influenced children's responses: they were most likely to make errors if asked "no" questions, and were unlikely to answer either yes/no question with "I don't know." In contrast, children spontaneously and frequently said "I don't know" to wh- questions about content they did not recall (environment), but not about content that was well recalled (actions). Implications of question format for reliability of eyewitness testimony by preschoolers are discussed.

Schuman, J. P., Bala, N., & Lee, K. (1999). Developmentally appropriate questions for child witnesses. *Queen's Law Journal*, 25, 251-304.

Recent legislative reforms in Canada have made it easier for courts to receive the testimony of children and for children to endure the experience of testifying. However, both lawyers and judges, unaware of the fundamentals of child development, often fail to question children effectively. Subjecting children to confusing and developmentally inappropriate questioning makes them unable to communicate accurately what happened to them and what they observed. Not only does this make the witnesses' experience upsetting, it makes it difficult to determine the truth. The authors explore ways in which justice system professionals' interactions with children may be improved: lawyers and judges can learn to ask questions appropriate for the age and capacity of the child witness, and judges can play a larger role in monitoring and assessing the questions children are asked in court. First, the authors argue that effective questioning of child witnesses requires an understanding of child development in three critical domains (linguistic, cognitive and emotional) and the use of appropriate questions for children's specific levels of development. With education, practice and sensitivity, justice system professionals can effectively question a child witness. Second, examining Canadian caselaw, they argue that the courts have a role to play in monitoring and assessing a child's ability to testify. Judges may choose to give less weight to the evidence of children if it was extracted by confusing or aggressive cross examination. Lawyers may also have an obligation to call expert evidence on child development to assist the courts in assessing the evidence of children. When children are questioned properly, most of them can be very effective witnesses. By learning to ask developmentally appropriate questions, lawyers and judges can improve the utility of children's testimony as well as reduce the likelihood that children will be traumatized by their courtroom experiences.

Warren, A. R., Woodall, C. E., Thomas, M., Nunno, M., Keeney, J. M., Larson, S. M., & Stadfeld, J. A. (1999). Assessing the effectiveness of a training program for interviewing child witnesses. *Applied Developmental Science*, 3(2), 128-135.

Twenty-seven experienced interviewers attended a 10-day training institute designed to provide knowledge and skills for improving investigative interviews with young children. Participants completed pre- and posttraining surveys assessing their knowledge of the scientific evidence



regarding memory, suggestibility, and other aspects of children's ability to provide accurate accounts of events during interviews. They also conducted pre- and posttraining interviews with preschool children about 2 previously experienced events. Participants' knowledge about children's abilities and the scientific basis of various interviewing protocols increased significantly after the training. However, training did not have a significant impact on interviewers' questioning styles or the amount of accurate information elicited from the children. Results indicate that successfully translating knowledge into practice requires multiple opportunities for skill practice and feedback.

Peterson, C., & Biggs, M. (1997). Interviewing children about trauma: Problems with “specific” questions. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 10*(2), 279-290.

A methodological ambiguity is described that may well adversely affect the quality of information provided by young child witnesses. Because the information children provide during interviews is sometimes the only evidence in forensic situations, its quality is a serious concern. “Specific” questions are often necessary to elicit enough information, but we describe a confusion between wh- questions (which request particular information) and yes/no questions (which merely require confirmation or disconfirmation). Research in which children are systematically interviewed about stressful medical experiences is reviewed, and we present results of a pilot investigation in which 2- to 13-year-old children were interviewed about traumatic injuries necessitating hospital treatment. Yes/no questions were problematic for preschoolers. Implications for testimony are discussed.

Carter, C. A., Bottoms, B. L., & Levine, M. (1996). Linguistic and socioemotional influences on the accuracy of children's reports. *Law and Human Behavior, 20*(3), 335-358.

Studied the impact of certain questioning tactics (e.g., use of legalese and socioemotional intimidation) on the accuracy of children's testimony. 60 children (aged 5 yrs 4 mo to 7 yrs 7 mo) were interviewed about a standardized play event with free-recall cues and detailed questions that were specific or misleading. Linguistic complexity of questions (complex or simple) and socioemotional context of interview (supportive or intimidating) were varied between Ss. Children were significantly less accurate in reporting the event when questioned with complex, developmentally inappropriate questions rather than with simple questions, yet they rarely voiced

their comprehension failures. In addition, children interviewed by a warm, supportive interviewer were more resistant to misleading questions about the event than were children interviewed in an intimidating manner. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2014 APA, all rights reserved).

Saywitz, K. J., & Goodman, G. S. (1996). Interviewing children in and out of court: Current research and practice implications. In J. Briere, L. Berliner, J. A. Bulkley, C. Jenny, & T. Reid (Eds.), *The APSC Handbook on Child Maltreatment* (pp. 297-318). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Perry, N. W., McAuliff, B. D., Tam, P., Claycomb, L., Dostal, C., & Flanagan, C. (1995). When lawyers question children: Is justice served?. *Law and Human Behavior*, 19(6), 609-629.

Assessed the impact of some complex vs simple question forms frequently used by attorneys on the children's understanding of typical courtroom questions forms and the accuracy of children's responses. 15 males and 15 females from each of 4 student populations (kindergarten, Grades 4 and 9, and college) viewed a videotaped incident and then responded to questions about the incident. Half the questions were asked in "lawyeres" (i.e., using complex question forms); the remaining half asked for the same information using simply phrased question forms of the same length. Lawyeres confused children, adolescents, and young adults alike. Questions that included multiple parts with mutually exclusive responses were the most difficult to answer; those that included negatives, double negatives, or difficult vocabulary also posed significant problems. Results suggest that complex question forms impede truth-seeking and should be prohibited in court. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2014 APA, all rights reserved)

Poole, D. A., & Lindsay, D. S. (1995). Interviewing preschoolers: Effects of nonsuggestive techniques, parental coaching, and leading questions on reports of nonexperienced events. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 60(1), 129-154.

This study explored preschoolers' eyewitness testimony under conditions designed to maximize (session 1) or degrade (session 2) the quality of their event reports. In session 1, thirty-nine 3- to 4-year-olds and twenty-nine 5- to 7-year-olds interacted with Mr. Science and were immediately interviewed using nonsuggestive techniques. The children did well in this immediate interview,

and nonsuggestive prompts elicited substantial amounts of new accurate information. Three months later 21 of the children heard their parents read a story about Mr. Science that described experienced and nonexperienced events preparatory to an interview in which children were asked nonleading, leading, and source monitoring questions about their experiences with Mr. Science. The children made many erroneous reports in this second interview (e.g., 41% of the 3- to 4-year-olds spontaneously reported that Mr. Science had done things that were mentioned only in the story). Patterns of errors in response to free recall, leading, and source monitoring questions are described.