

From Art to Science: Emerging Trends in Child Forensic Interviewing

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Tell Me All About...YOU

- How long have you been interviewing?
- What protocols or guidelines do you use?
- Do you conduct multi-session interviews?

In the Beginning...

- 1970's & 1980's
- No protocols – clinical principles, interrogation principles
- “Unholy Alliance”
- “Satanic Panic”

The Road Traveled: McMartin Preschool and Children's Institute International

- MacFarlane: Here's a hard question I don't know if you know the answer to. We'll see how smart you are, Pac-man. Did you ever see anything come out of Mr. Ray's wiener? Do you remember that?
- Child: (no response)
- MacFarlane: Can you remember back that far? We'll see how ... how good your brain is working today, Pac-man.
- (Child moves puppet around.)
- MacFarlane: Is that a yes?
- (Child nods puppet yes.)

McMartin

- MacFarlane: Well, you're smart. Now, let's see if we can figure out what it was. I wonder if you can point to something of what color it was.
- (Child tries to pick up the pointer with the Pac-man's mouth.)
- MacFarlane: Let me get your pen here (puts a pointer in child's Pac-man puppet mouth).
- Child: It was ...
- MacFarlane: Let's see what color is that.
- (Child uses the Pac-man's hand to point to the Pac-man puppet.)
- MacFarlane: Let's see what color is that.

McMartin

- (Child uses the Pac-man's hand to point to the Pac-man puppet.)
- MacFarlane: Oh, you're pointing to yourself. That must be yellow.
- (Child nods puppet yes.)
- MacFarlane: You're smart to point to yourself. What did it feel like? Was it like water? Or some-thing else?
- Child: Um, what?
- MacFarlane: The stuff that came out. Let me try. I'll try a different question on you. We'll try to figure out what that stuff tastes like. We're going to try and figure out if it tastes good.
- Child: He never did that to [me], I don't think.

McMartin

- MacFarlane: Oh, well, Pac-man, would you know what it tastes like? Would you think it tastes like candy, sort of trying ...
- Child: I think it would taste like yucky ants.
- MacFarlane: Yucky ants. Whoa. That would be kind of yucky. I don't think it would taste like ... you don't think it would taste like strawberries or anything good?
- Child: No.
- MacFarlane: Oh. Think it would so ... do you think that would be sticky, like sticky, yucky ants?
- Child: A little.

Late 1980's – 1990's: Move to Guidelines

- Guidelines for the Clinical Evaluation for Child and Adolescent Sexual Abuse (AACAP, 1988)
- Psychosocial Evaluation of Suspected Sexual Abuse in Children Psychosocial (APSAC, 1990)

Research

- Memory & Suggestibility
- Evolution continues: from art to science

Move To Training

- NCAC (Carnes)
- APSAC
- CornerHouse
- Cincinnati Childhood Trust

Protocol Developments

- Yuille's Step-Wise
- CornerHouse / Finding Words / ChildFirst (RATAC)
- NCAC (Steele, 2003)
- NICHD (Lamb, 2007)
- Lyon's Ten-Step
- Everson's RADAR
- CornerHouse

States with Guidelines / Protocols

- Alaska
- Michigan
- Washington State
- Oregon
- Texas

Extended / Multi-Session Models

- NCAC
 - Carnes: Extended Forensic Evaluation
 - Steele: Extended Forensic Interview
- CornerHouse
 - Multi-Session Interview

And then there's ...

- Compliant teens
- CSEC
- Human Trafficking
- FBI / Homeland Security / NCMEC

Emerging Practice Consensus

Research suggests that children may be more accurate and informative when we:

1. Elicit a promise to tell the truth
2. Provide interview instructions / guidelines
3. Encourage narrative responses
4. Promote episodic memory retrieval before arriving at the report-exploration phase

1. Promise to Tell the Truth

- May increase accurate responding for some children who otherwise would not
 - Reluctant children
 - Fabricating children
- Important to use age-appropriate language
- Establish a context (“this talk” / “this room”)
- Example:
 - “While we’re in this room, do you promise that you will tell the truth?” is better than “Promise me you will tell the truth”

2. Interview Instructions

- Purposes:
 - Provide instructions on expected behavior
 - Encourage child to assert, correct, inquire
 - Reduce authority of interviewer
- Practice:
 - Research suggests children should practice the application of the guideline
 - Especially important for younger children
- Preschoolers:
 - May not benefit from this task
 - Practicing the guidelines may still provide some information about their abilities

Interview Instructions: Options

- Intentional discussion at beginning of interview
- Followed by reinforcement as opportunities arise
- Identify and reinforce as opportunities naturally present themselves
- Either option is defensible, but know why you do what you do

Intentional Interview Instructions

1. Tell me if you don't know something
2. Tell me if you don't understand a question
3. Correct me if I get something wrong

Other instructions?



Recommendations

- A significant benefit to intentional interview instructions is that it's not left up to chance.
- Deficits may include information overload, lack of context and the suggestion that there are “right” and “wrong” answers.
- Be mindful of interview guidelines for children of all ages, whether intentionally delivered or reinforced as opportunity arises

3. Narrative Practice

- Assists in building rapport
 - Child identifies topic of interest
- Provides information about the child's:
 - Ability to respond to question-types
 - Developmental capacity
- Distinguishes interview from other adult-child interactions
 - Child as information-holder

Why is Narrative Practice Important?

- Reduces appearance of authority of interviewer
- Increases forensically relevant information in substantive phase of interview
- Increases number of details during substantive phase of interview
- Open-ended prompts in practice may lead to more accurate accounts in disclosure

How do I do it?

- Start in rapport-building
- Ask open-ended questions
- Follow up for additional details
- Ask about something in which the child is interested
- Be aware of time limitations

4. Episodic Memory Training

“Episodic details are accessible even after a script is likely to have formed about a repeated event.”

(Schneider et al., 2010, p. 868)

Episodic Memory Training

- Promotes early disclosure of multiple events
- Promotes children's use of episodic language
- Assists in recall of differences across events
- Enhances organization of reports
- We gain clarity without sacrificing accuracy

How do I do it?

- Also during rapport
- Select topic of interest offered by the child
- Or provide a specific focus, such as:
 - This morning, from the time you woke up to the time you came here;
 - Tell me all about your last birthday
- TMAP
- Follow up with wh / h questions
- Seek sensory details
- With children 7+, tie it in to interview approach:
 - “That’s how I want you to answer my questions, telling me all about things you know, just like that.”

What does all this look like strung together? Ray and Dionna



Emerging Consensus #5

- PEER-REVIEW

Thank You

- Contact Information for Allison Foster:
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References:

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2. Interview Guidelines: Tom Lyon
- 3 & 4: Narrative Practice & Episodic Memory Training:
Snider & Everson, 2011; Steele, 2010; Sternberg et al, 1997;
Brubacher et al., 2011