

Evidence Based Training Model for Investigative Interviews with Children: research results



**ALAIN CORRIVEAU
GAVIN FLETCHER
CARMELA SAVOIA**

**CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY OF OTTAWA
JUNE 2, 2008**

Project Background Context



- Joint project between the Ottawa CAS and the Child Memory and Learning Lab at Wilfrid Laurier University, 2006
- Headed by Dr. Kim Roberts
- Dr. Heather Price, University of Regina
- Research Project:
 - To test effectiveness of the training program model
 - To learn more about children's capacities as eyewitness in alleged abuse cases

Dr. Kim Roberts, primary lead

kroberts@wlu.ca



- Associate Professor at Wilfrid Laurier University, 2001
- Worked 5 years at National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland with Dr. Michael Lamb
- Recipient of Premier's Research Excellence Award and Grace Anderson Fellowship
- Currently examining several facets of how children encode and remember things that happen to them
- Working with several Canadian police forces on establishing effective interviewing techniques

Dr. Heather Price

Heather.Price@uregina.ca



- Assistant Professor at University of Regina
- Recent postdoctoral fellow at Wilfrid Laurier University and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- PhD from Simon Fraser University's Forensic Psychology Program
- Currently studying children's memory for stressful events and other aspects of how children remember and talk about past experiences

Aims of the Training Research Project:

- General Aims of the project:
 - To test the effectiveness of the training program for CAS interviews:
 - To learn about children's capacities as eyewitnesses in alleged abuse cases
 - To provide a Train the Trainer component to the training initiative for the Ottawa CAS

Research Questions:



- Does the training result in an improvement in the amount and quality of information that children report?
- When does the improvement occur? (i.e., how much training is needed before an improvement is realized)
- Are the proposed improvements seen for children of all ages?
- Are the proposed improvements seen for both boys and girls?
- Are the proposed improvements seen for both allegations of isolated incidents and allegations of multiple incidents of abuse?

Interviewer Training Project Summary:



- **Phase 1: Pre-Training preparations**
 - 15 participants were selected to participate in this training program (13 from CAS, 2 from Ottawa Police Service)
 - The participants recorded interviews prior to beginning the formal training
 - The recorded interviews were submitted for transcription and coding by the WLU lab
 - The interviews were coded for (a) interviewer utterances and (b) child details

Interviewer Training Project Summary



- **Phase 2: Introductory Training**

- Two days of introduction to child development principles, with a focus on constructs of memory and a structured interview protocol
- Following the initial two days, interviewers submitted taped interviews for transcription and coding
- Detailed feedback, both written and through a telephone session was provided to each participant for every interview submitted
- Feedback to participants focused on interview structure and strategies for improving interviewer prompts
- This phase lasted 3 months

Interviewer Training Project Summary



- **Phase 3: Training Refresher**

- Two months after initial training, participants received an additional two days of training
- Training comprised a review of initial training session information and in-class practice with interview scenarios
- Participants continued to regularly submit interviews for feedback on a weekly to bi-weekly basis
- This phase lasted 5 months



Research Results

Summary Results of Training Project



- **THE % OF INTERVIEWER OPEN-ENDED UTTERANCES IMPROVED FROM 22% TO 38% IN POST-TRAINING INTERVIEWS.**
- **THESE DIFFERENCES ARE STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT.**
- **THE % OF INTERVIEWER CLOSED-ENDED UTTERANCES DECREASED FROM 74% TO 60% IN POST-TRAINING INTERVIEWS.**

Summary Results of Training Project



- **FOR EACH TYPE OF PROMPT (EXT. OP), THE DETAILS REPORTED BY CHILDREN TO ANY GIVEN PROMPT *INCREASED* FROM PRE-TRAINING TO POST-TRAINING**
- **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EACH PROMPT INCREASED WITH TRAINING**
- **IN SOME CASES (CI, DN, DS, F), THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE PROMPTS RESULTED IN AS MUCH AS TWO TIMES THE INFORMATION THAT WAS REPORTED PRIOR TO TRAINING**

Summary Results of Training Project



FOLLOWING TRAINING:

INTERVIEWERS SUCCESSFULLY INCORPORATED THE STRUCTURED COMPONENTS OF THE INTERVIEW,

DECREASED THE NUMBER OF PROMPTS USED OVERALL,

USED BETTER PROMPTS MORE OFTEN AND LESS EFFECTIVE PROMPTS LESS OFTEN, AND

ELICITED MORE DETAILS IN RESPONSE TO ALMOST ALL PROMPTS.

Summary Results of Training Project



IMPLEMENTING THE PRINCIPLES LEARNED DID NOT RESULT IN LONGER INTERVIEWS.

POST TRAINING INTERVIEWS LASTED ABOUT 22.92 MIN., WHILE PRE TRAINING INTERVIEWS LASTED ABOUT 26.75 MIN.

Summary Results of Training Project



Pre-training results for protocol components

- Practice Interview: .04
- Truth/Lies: .54
- Ok to say "I don't know": .39
- Correct if wrong: .04

Post-training results for protocol components

- Practice Interview: .51
- Truth/Lies: .81
- Ok to say "I don't know": .67
- Correct if wrong: .64

Summary Results of Training Project



Pre-training proportion of utterances

- Invitation: .02
- Invitation Occ.: .00
- Cued Invitation: .02
- Directed Nar.: .13
- Paraphrase: .05
- **Total open: .22**

Post-training proportion of utterances

- Invitation: .05
- Invitation Occ.: .01
- Cued Invitation: .08
- Directed Nar.: .19
- Paraphrase: .05
- **Total open: .38**

Summary Results of Training Project



Pre-training proportion of utterances

- Directed specific: .17
- Option-posing: .03
- Yes/No: .51
- Suggestive: .03

- **Total closed: .74**

Post-training proportion of utterances

- Directed specific: .15
- Option-posing: .01
- Yes/No: .42
- Suggestive: .02

- **Total closed: .60**

Summary Results of Training Project



Pre-training average for details elicited by prompt type

- Invitation: 6.74
- Invitation Occ.: 0.07
- Cued Invitation: 6.54
- Directed Narr.: 7.95
- Paraphrase: 3.35
- Directed Specific: 3.89
- Option Posing: 3.04
- Yes/No: 4.33
- Suggestive: 2.86
- Facilitator: 6.26

Post-training average for details elicited by prompt type

- Invitation: 10.66
- Invitation Occ.: 2.97
- Cued Invitation: 16.04
- Directed Narr.: 14.53
- Paraphrase: 4.84
- Directed Specific: 6.38
- Option Posing: 2.20
- Yes/No: 6.11
- Suggestive: 3.69
- Facilitator: 12.10



Sample of Training Content

Sample Learning: Cognitive Memory Development



- The development of memory formation is complex
- Understanding how some aspects of memory are developed is important to interviewing because:
 - It helps to assess where the child is at
 - It helps to understand how children process information
 - Provides a context for interviewing more effectively

Sample Learning: False Beliefs



- Refers to the fact that children become more able to discern that not all situations are equal
 - Crayon box example
- ✦ **What are the implications for practice:**
 - The older the child is, the more likely they are to be misled by an interviewer who presents as knowledgeable about the event
 - Counter this by making a clear statement of naivete: *“I wasn’t there and so I don’t know what happened. I need you to tell me...”*

Sample Learning: Symbolic Thinking



- Refers to the child's capacity to strategize and understand that some concepts can be the same despite appearing different
 - 2 glasses containing same amount of water
 - Reasons why a child might be crying
- ✦ **What are the implications for practice:**
 - We cannot form assumptions about what the child may or may not have experienced, remembered or be impacted by
 - Important to let the child lead the discussion

Sample Learning: Repeated Events



- The more frequent the experience, the less detailed will be the disclosure.
- The child will have difficulty isolating a particular event.
- However, some variations in the repeated event can be well-remembered, such as:
 - ✦ ***Interruptions***
 - ✦ ***Things that disrupt the incident/event***
 - ✦ ***One-time occurrences within a series of repeated events***

Sample Learning: Gist versus Verbatim



- Gist versus verbatim:
 - **Gist** refers to a verbal description of the general content of the event
 - **Verbatim** refers to an account of the exact details of an event – e.g., time, colors, objects, etc.

Sample Learning: Reconstruction Exercise



George was alone. He knew they would soon be here. They were not far behind him when he left the village, hungry and cold. He dared not for food or shelter for fear of falling into the hands of his pursuers. There were many of them; they were strong and he was weak. George could hear the noise as the uniformed band beat its way through the trees not far behind him. The sense of their presence was everywhere. His spine tingled with fear. Eagerly he awaited the darkness. In darkness, he would find safety.

Sample Learning: Type of Prompts



Open-ended Prompts

- **Invitations**
- **Cued Invitations**
- **Invitation-Occurrence**
- **Facilitators**
- **Paraphrase**

Focused/Closed Prompts

- **Directed**
- **Yes/No**
- **Option-Posing**
- **Suggestive**
 - **Paraphrase**



Sample
Learning: Type
of Prompts

Invitations

- **The most open-ended of all prompts.**
- **They invite the child to talk about the event but contain no cues from the interviewer and no direction as to what topics are important:**
 - Tell me what happened.
 - What else happened?
 - And then what happened?
 - What else do you want to tell me?
 - Tell me more.
 - What else?



Sample
Learning: Type
of Prompts

Cued
Invitations

- **These questions are also open-ended in format, but contain some detail the child has already disclosed at any point in the interview:**
 - C. He touched me.
 - I. Tell me about the part when he touched you.
 - I. Tell me about the touching.
 - I. Earlier you said he touched me. Tell me about the touching.



Sample
Learning: Type
of Prompts

Invitation-
Occurrence

- **These prompts direct a child's attention to one particular instance of an event with an open-ended invitation, once the child has introduced the event.**
 - Tell me everything you can remember about the first time it happened.
 - I really want to hear about the last time it happened. Tell me all about it.



Sample Learning: Type of Prompts

Facilitator

- **Facilitator prompts are not questions. They are tools that are used to facilitate or bolster children's reports. Facilitator prompts show interest and encourage a child to continue.**
 - Okay
 - It's okay
 - You're doing fine
 - Uh huh
 - I see
 - hmmm



Sample
Learning: Type
of Prompts

Paraphrase

- **Paraphrasing occurs at any point in the interview that the interviewer explicitly paraphrases or repeats information the child has mentioned during any part of the interview. When paraphrasing, be sure to use the child's own words.**
 - C. It happened in the morning.
 - I. In the morning. Okay.

Sample Learning: Interview Protocol



- **Interview Phases:**
 - **Preparation**
 - **Environment**
 - **Ground Rules**
 - **Competency**
 - **Rapport Building**
 - **Practice Interview**
 - **Substantive Phase (getting to the critical information)**
 - **Closure**

Sample Learning: Interview Protocol

Ground Rules



- **Establishing Ground Rules helps the child situate the context of the interview and understand what is expected of them during the interview**
- **Ground rules help establish competency:**
 - I meet with lots of children so that they can tell me the truth about things that have happened to them. So before we begin, I want to make sure that you understand what it means to tell the truth. If I said that my shoes are red, is that true or not true?
 - I see that you know what telling the truth means. It's very important that you only tell me the truth today. You should only tell me things that really happened to you.

Sample Learning: Interview Protocol

Ground Rules



- Giving permission not to answer or to correct the interviewer:

“And if you don’t understand, or you don’t know the answer, just say “I don’t know” or “I don’t understand”. So if I ask you what was in this (drawer/behind that window/in the next room/in my pocket/in my purse) what would you say?”

{Wait for an answer}

“Right. You don’t know, do you?”

{Pause}

“And if I say things that are wrong, you should correct me. Okay?” {Wait for an answer}

“So if I said that you were a boy (when interviewing a girl) what would you say?”

{Wait for an answer}

“That’s right. Now you know that you should correct me if I make a mistake or say something that is wrong.”

Sample Learning: Interview Protocol

Rapport Building



“Now I want to get to know you a little better. Tell me about yourself.” {pause – give time for response}

“Tell me more about *what the child just mentioned.*”

“Okay. Tell me what you like to do at home.” {pause}

“Tell me more {about what the child has mentioned}.”

“ You’ve told me about yourself. Now I want to hear about your family. Tell me all about your family.”

...the house where you live

...school

...what you like to do at school

...your teacher

...your friends

Sample Learning: Interview Protocol Rapport Building



- When you are building rapport and disclosure starts to happen, what do you do?
- Topics may overlap with substantive topics – e.g., home or school – so...
 - CHOOSE OTHER TOPICS
 - ✦ Favorite television program
 - ✦ Favorite computer game
 - ✦ Favorite sport or other activities
 - ✦ It is always better to hold off on a discussion on substantive information

Sample Learning: Interview Protocol

Rapport Building



- **How does this example build rapport?**
 - I. Now I want to get to know you a little better. Tell me about yourself.
 - C. I've got a sticker.
 - I. Where did you get your sticker?
 - C. School
 - I. Who gave it to you?
 - C. My teacher.
 - I. What's your teacher's name.

Sample Learning: Interview Protocol

Rapport Building



- It does not practice the child in recall memory
- It gives the impression the child just has to answer your questions
- It feels like a test (very poor practice for rapport building)
- It won't get any narrative response and will impact the chances of getting narrative responses later in the interview, so...
 - You will not get the information you need

Sample Learning: Interview Protocol

Practice Interview



- **Practice Interviews (an interview within the interview) are important:**
 - To transfer control to the child
 - To give the child practice in providing narrative responses
 - To give the interviewer practice in asking questions at the child's level before getting into the reason for the investigation

Sample Learning: Interview Protocol

Practice Interview



- **Ask the child about a recent event not related to the purpose of your meeting**
- **Exhaust the child's recall memory by using open-ended prompts and ask about a second event if necessary**

Sample Learning: Interview Protocol



- **Practice Interview: Suggestions**
- **A little while ago, you had your last day of school. Tell me all about your last day of school.**
- **Tell me what happened from the time you got up till the time you went to bed.**
- **And then what happened?**
- **Tell me what happened at (specific time) from the very beginning to the very end.**

Sample Learning: Substantive Phase



- **Why is it important to have a substantive phase?**
 - **This is where you will get the critical information**
 - You want to get good quality information about the child's experiences at two levels:
 - ✦ **Quantity: getting enough information**
 - ✦ **Quality: getting accurate information**
- **What do I do at this stage of the interview?**
 - This is where you introduce the topic (transition into why you are there)
 - Get an account of events using *open-ended* prompts

Sample Learning: Substantive Phase



- Now that I know you a little better, I want to talk about why you are here today (I am here today).
- Now that we've chatted a bit, I want to talk about why I'm here today.
- I understand that something may have happened to you. Tell me everything from the very beginning to the very end, as best you can remember.
- Tell me why your mom brought you here today.
- I've heard that you talked to a doctor. Tell me what you talked about.

Sample Learning: Getting to the specific allegation

Transitioning:

- Now that I know you a little better, I want to talk about why you are here today (I am here today).
- Now that we've chatted a bit, I want to talk about why I'm here today.
- I understand that something may have happened to you. Tell me everything from the very beginning to the very end, as best you can remember.
- I've heard that you talked to a doctor. Tell me what you talked about.

Sample Learning: Getting to the specific allegation



- **Specific questions are not meant to be used in every interview**
- **The questions get more and more directed ONLY if the child has not talked and you are well into the interview**
 - I see that you have marks on your arm. Tell me everything about the marks on your arm.
 - Dr. Smith told me that you were crying. Tell me more about that.
 - It is important that I know why you were crying. Tell me what made you cry.

Tips for effective interviewing



- transfer control – let the child do the talking
- ask several “tell me more” type questions before cueing
- provide several cues, and then back to a new topic
- tolerate silence
- always return to open-ended questions
- don’t interrupt to get a particular detail, let the child keep going until recall is exhausted
- carefully encourage – link praise to behavior not the content of the child’s answers (e.g., you’re doing a good job sitting still)



Sample Learning:

“Can You”

- Can you tell me a little bit about home?
 - ✦ Yes/no question
 - ✦ What if you get a “no” response?
- Mostly a habit on the part of the interviewer
 - ✦ With practice, it will become more natural to say “tell me” than “can you tell me”
- Can preface with a motivational statement or a rationale
 - ✦ I’m really interested in hearing about mealtimes. Tell me more about mealtimes
 - ✦ What else can you tell me about mealtimes?

Delivery of Training May/08



**FIRST SESSION OF IN-HOUSE DELIVERY OCCURRED
ON MAY 8 – 9, 2008**

SESSION INCLUDED 9 TRAINEES

CURRENTLY, IN PROCESS FOR INTERVIEW FEEDBACK

Evidence Based Training Model for Investigative Interviews with Children



QUESTIONS?



Evidence Based Training Model for Investigative Interviews with Children



CONTACTS:

ALAIN CORRIVEAU: ACORRIVEAU@CASOTT.ON.CA

GAVIN FLETCHER: GFLETCHER@CASOTT.ON.CA

CARMELA SAVOIA: CSAVOIA@CASOTT.ON.CA

