

03 Question Types

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Child Interviewing Seminar

No “can/do”

- You’re using yes/no questions if:
 - Child is responding with head nods and shakes, or with single words.
 - Can you tell me...
 - Do you know...
 - Did...
 - Was

Why not closed-ended

- Because children will answer with a single word rather than use their words.
- Because they often suggest what *you think happened* rather than what the child knows.
- Because they require you to use *your words*, and those words may be difficult or ambiguous.
- Because sometimes children have response biases (always say yes, always say no).
- Because children will guess when they don’t know the answer.

Waterman, Blades, & Spencer (2000)

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Do children try to answer nonsensical questions?

Amanda H. Waterman,* Mark Blades and Christopher Spencer
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Waterman, Blades, & Spencer (2000)

- 73 6- to 8-year-olds (range 5-3 to 8-5)
- Asked 14 questions (judged as sensible or nonsensical by adults)
 - 3 sensible open-questions
 - 3 sensible closed-questions
 - 3 nonsensical open-questions
 - 3 nonsensical closed-questions
 - 2 scrambled questions (words rearranged)
- 'I am going to ask you some questions. If you think you know the answer, then you can tell me. With some of the questions, you might not know the answer or you might not understand the question. That's OK, and you can tell me if you don't know the answer or if you don't understand the question.'
- 3 weeks later, asked whether questions made sense or were silly

Waterman, Blades, & Spencer (2000)

List of questions for Expt 1

Sensible open questions

What colour is a banana?
How many ears does a dog have?
What do birds eat?

Sensible closed questions

Is a bus longer than a car?
Is a rabbit faster than a tortoise?
Is summer hotter than winter?

Nonsensical open questions

What do bricks eat?
Where do circles live?
What do feet have for breakfast?

Nonsensical closed questions

Is a box louder than a knee?
Is a stone slower than an eat?
Is a jumper angrier than a tree?

Scrambled questions

Than is louder thunder whisper a?
Many does how person legs have a?

Waterman, Blades, & Spencer (2000)

Table 1. Mean proportion of correct responses for each type of question and age group in Expt 1, Task 1

Age	Question type				
	Sensible		Nonsensical		Scrambled
	Open	Closed	Open	Closed	
8 years	0.98	0.97	0.94	0.38	0.93
7 years	0.96	0.95	0.88	0.26	0.95
6 years	0.91	0.91	0.88	0.19	0.91
All	0.95	0.94	0.90	0.28	0.93

Children answered the nonsensical closed questions 72% of the time (and virtually always later recognized these questions as "silly")

Examples of open-ended followup questions

- What did you SEE...
- What sounds did you HEAR...

Elischberger & Roebbers (2001)

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2001, 25 (2), 140-146
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Improving young children's free narratives about an observed event:
The effects of nonspecific verbal prompts

Holger B. Elischberger and Claudia M. Roebbers
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Elischberger & Roebers (2001)

- 83 K (Mean 6-0) and 2nd Graders (Mean 8-2)
- Watch a 7 minute long movie
 - It shows a boy—the victim—and his little sister on their way home from school being held up by a gang of six boys. They search the victim's pockets and take away his money. To get it back he has to fight the leader of the gang.
- 3 weeks later
 - Asked to tell everything about the movie twice, OR
 - Asked to tell everything, then asked Tell me everything you heard, Tell me everything you saw.

Elischberger & Roebers (2001)

Table 1
Mean number of items recalled initially (with standard deviations)

	No cues	Verbal cues	Overall
Kindergarten	2.05 (1.61)	3.06 (2.56)	2.51 (2.13)
Second grade	8.71 (3.78)	9.28 (4.41)	9.02 (4.10)
Overall	5.46 (4.44)	6.76 (4.85)	6.12 (4.67)

Table 2
Mean number of new items recalled in response to additional instructions (with standard deviations)

	No cues	Verbal cues	Overall
Kindergarten	0.25 (0.64)	1.59 (2.12)	0.86 (1.64)
Second grade	0.57 (0.87)	2.32 (2.53)	1.52 (2.13)
Overall	0.41 (0.77)	2.02 (2.37)	1.23 (1.94)

K: heard/saw increased number of details by 52% (1.59/3.06)

2: heard/saw increased number of details by 25% (2.32/9.28)

Other good open-ended followups

- How did you FEEL...
- What did you THINK...

Narrative Practice Rapport Building

- Ask child to narrate an event.
- E.g. "Tell me about your last birthday. Tell me everything that happened."
- Purpose is to elicit complete details about
 - Actions and reactions
 - From the beginning of the event to the end
- Use *cued invitations*:
 - You said X. Tell me more about X.
 - You said X. What happened next?

Potential problems with NP Rapport Building

- Yes/no questions!
- Scripts
 - E.g. Tell me what you do in school.
 - "And then we do math"
 - Child is not recalling a *specific* event
- Lists
 - E.g. What presents did you get?
 - "I got a bike and a sweater and a bear."
 - Child is not recalling an event *in sequence*

Potential problems with NP Rapport Building

- Semantic memory
 - E.g. Tell me about soccer.
 - "In soccer you can't use your hands."
 - Child is not recalling her *experience*.
- Narrowing of focus
 - E.g. You said you got a bike. Tell me who gave you your bike.
 - Not an invitation but a *wh-* question
 - Interrupts the narrative *flow*.

Eliciting a Narrative Case Study: (Kimberly, 9)

- Witness to homicide
 - Father heard shots, told Kimberly's mother, Kimberly, and the other children (4-year-old sister, 14-year-old brother) to lock themselves in a bedroom in the home.

Narrative Practice

Q: Now, tell me about your last birthday. Tell me everything you did for your last birthday.

A: My last birthday?

Q: Yeah.

A: My last birthday, my dad he bought a cake. It was a Hello Kitty. And my mom kept taking a lot of pictures. Then my mommy, my little sister didn't want to take pictures.

Q: Uh huh. Now you said that your dad bought you a cake, hello kitty, tell me more about that.

A: Well the flavor was strawberry. It didn't actually, it did actually have some fruit in it.. It did have fruit in it..

Narrative Practice

Q: Uh huh. *And what's the first thing you did for your birthday, what's the first thing?*

A: The first thing I did, is I don't think it's sometime of my birthday. I went to school

Q: Oh ok. *Then what happened?*

A: My parents weren't there. They were in Los Angeles. I think they were buying called Terriyaki House, so they were in LA

Q: Ok, yea. *Then what?*

A: Then they came home, and my dad didn't know what house I was at because I went to my friend's house

Narrative Practice

Q: And then *what happened right after that, after she came home with Briana.*

A: Um, we were watching TV and doing our homework.

Q: Uh huh.

A: *After that* I was waiting for my novella to start but my brother was all telling me to change the channels because it wasn't, my novella wasn't on....

Q: Anything else?

A: And *after that*, my dad came in the room and he's all telling my brother to close the windows and lock the door...

Factors that increase productivity

- Narrative Practice (Hershkovitz, 2009; Sternberg et al., 2007; Roberts, et al., 2004)
- Greater use of invitations (Lamb, et al., 2008)
 - "tell me more about X"
 - "you said X. What happened next?"
- Action invitations (Lamb, et al., 2003)
 - "tell me more about X" when X refers to an *action*
- Use of the child's name (Hershkovitz, 2009)
- Verbal encouragement (Hershkovitz, 2009)
 - E.g. "You are doing just fine," "you are telling very well," "you really help me understand"
- Back-channel statements/facilitators (Cautilli, et al., 2005)
 - E.g. "uh-huh"

Factors that *decrease* productivity (compared to cued invitations)

- Invitations without content
 - Don't just say "tell me more" (Hershkovitz, 2001)
 - Don't just say "tell more about that" when "that" may be unclear (Walker, 1993)
- Invitations as questions
 - "you said he hurt you?" (Evans & Roberts, 2009; Evans et al., 2010)

Peer review of rapport- building: forensic interviews

Narrative Practice Peer Review (1)

Madison W. (8 years old)
Q: Tell me about your eighth birthday, when you turned eight.
A: I got a bike.
Q: Okay. Tell me about your bike.
A: It's pink and purple.
Q: Um hmm. And who gave you your bike?
A: I forgot.
Q: Okay. Do you like to ride bikes?
A: Uh huh.
Q: And what else about your birthday?
[pause]
A: Um.
Q: Did you have cake when you turned eight years old?
A: Yeah.
Q: Do you remember what kind you had?
A: No.
Q: And what would you like to get for your nine-year-old birthday?
A: A kitten.

Narrative Practice Peer Review (2)

Monica D. (4 years old)
Q: Oh, Ok you're four years old. Did you have a birthday party?
A: Yeah.
Q: When you got 4 years old? Tell me about your birthday party
A: It was a princess on the cake.
Q: Oh, it was princess and the cake. Did you get a present?
A: Yeah.
Q: What did you get?
A: I got a prin..., this one and a doll like a princess like it wass real but its not
real but um it having shoes on her legs.
Q: Is she pretty?
A: [Nods head yes].

Narrative Practice Peer Review (3)

Mariana K.(4 years old)

Q: How old are you?

A: Four.

Q: Four? Did you have a birthday?

A: It was a butterfly birthday.

Q: Oh, tell me more about that.

A: We had cake.

Q: You had cake? What kind?

A: Mine was a strawberry kind, and I had a butterfly party.

Q: Oh how pretty. Did you get a present on your birthday?

A: Yeah.

Q: What'd you get?

A: It was one from my cousin Nikk. [uh-huh] One from my cousin Gale, one from my cousin Nicole. [uh-huh] One from my cousin Rachel. From Michelle.

Q: Oh, lots of people.

A: But they're all my cousins.

Narrative Practice Peer Review (3)

Rajai (5 years old)

Q: OK, and tell me about your last birthday when you turned five.

A: My other birthday?

Q: Yeah. Tell me about it. What happened?

A: I think it's the eighth.

Q: OK, and when you had your five year birthday, what did you guys do? When you turned five.

A: **We jumped in a jumper. [uh-huh] And we ate some cake. [Yeah] We [bust?] a piano?, and we ate some chicken. We ate some rice. [uh-huh] And beans, and we did [pause] we, um, put I play with my dogs. We got two dogs. Well first we have three dogs but now we have two dogs because my other one died.**

Q: Who were your dogs?

A: Booty, Precious, and Lady.

Q: OK, aaand did you get a present when it was your birthday?

A: Uh-huh.

Q: What'd you get?

A: I got a teddy bear and I got [pause to color and think] ermm a car. [mm-hmm] And I got papers. I got pencils. And that's all.

Q: OK, and how old are you going to be on your next birthday, Rajai?

A: [pause] [counting softly] Six.

Can RATAC accommodate
narrative practice rapport
building?

Yes!

Anderson, J., et al. (2010). The Cornerhouse forensic interview protocol: RATAAC. *Thomas M. Cooley Journal of Practical and Clinical Law*, 12, 193-331.

Rapport Building

- Face Picture: Interviewer and/or child draws child's face and child names features.
- Family Circles: Child names and interviewer draws immediate and extended family members.
- Anderson et al. at 268-269.

It is **essential for school-age and adolescent children to have an opportunity to offer information on topics of interest to them**, such as their friends, sports, music, or other hobbies, in addition to providing information about the more traditional topics of school and family. Anderson et al. at 271.

Open-ended rapport building increases productivity

- When rapport is developed using open-ended questions that invite the child to speak freely, children who have experienced sexual abuse are more detailed in their subsequent disclosures. Sternberg et al. concluded that children who were asked open-ended questions during the Rapport stage provided two and one-half times as many details and words than those children who were asked direct questions. Anderson et al. at 273.

If it works with younger kids, it's OK

Modifications have been made as more has been learned about children's capabilities and perceptions. Anderson et al., at 195.

For more information

- Google "tlyon bepress" for copies of ten-step interview, articles, etc.
- Midwestern Regional Child Advocacy Center has registration for weekly webinar on child interviewing.
- tlyon@law.usc.edu
