

# Interview Instructions

Tom Lyon  
Child Interviewing Seminar  
Spring 2013  
Gee & Pipe (1999)  
Russell (2006)  
With the assistance of Brittany Younger

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Why instructions?

- Children don't say I don't know
- Children don't say I don't understand
- Children are reluctant to correct the interviewer
- Children assume the interviewer knows the answers
- A promise to tell the truth increases children's accuracy

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Don't Know Instruction

- If I ask you a question and you don't know the answer, then just say, "I don't know."
- So if I ask you "What is my dog's name?" what do you say?
- OK, because you don't know.
- But what if I ask you "Do you have a dog?"
- OK, because you do know.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What if the child guesses? (e.g.,  
“your dog’s name is fuzzy”)

- No, that isn’t my dog’s name. You see, you don’t know my dog’s name. So if you don’t know the answer to my question, you can say I don’t know.
- Let’s try another one. What is my last name?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Don’t Understand Instruction

- If I ask you a question and you don’t know what I mean or what I’m saying, you can
- say, “I don’t know what you mean.” I will ask it a different way.
- So if I ask you “What is your gender?” what do you say?
- That’s because “gender” is a hard word. So I would say, “Are you a boy or a girl?”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What if the child knows “gender”  
(e.g. “female”)?

- Good! Now try this one, “What is my orientation.”
- OK, because orientation is a hard word. So I’ll ask it in another way, “Am I standing up or sitting down?”

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### You're wrong instruction

- Sometimes I make mistakes or say the wrong thing. When I do, you can tell me that I am wrong.
- So if I say, "You are thirty years old," what do you say?
- OK, so how old are you?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Ignorant Interviewer Instruction

- I don't know what's happened to you.
- I won't be able to tell you the answers to my questions.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Problems with ad libbed instructions

- Instructions should be:
  - Easy to understand
  - As succinct as possible
  - Given with examples/feedback

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Limitations of instructions

- Instructions may work less well with younger children
- Suggestive interviewing is likely to overwhelm instruction benefits
- Efficacy tested in the laboratory

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Gee, Gregory, and Pipe (1999)

*Legal and Criminological Psychology* (1999), 4, 111-128 *Printed in Great Britain*  
© 1999 The British Psychological Society

111

### 'What colour is your pet dinosaur?' The impact of pre-interview training and question type on children's answers

Susan Gee\*, Marian Gregory and Margaret-Ellen Pipe  
*University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand and Edith Cowan University, Perth, Australia*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Gee, Gregory, & Pipe (1999)

- Study 1: 106 9- to 13-year-olds
- Class trip to science center, interview approximately one week later
- 10 forced choice
- 10 specification (wh- with specific information; e.g. "what color was the entrance-way?")
- 10 yes/no
- Half misleading, half non-misleading

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Gee, Gregory, & Pipe (1999)

- Training condition:
  - Asked series of questions to which I don't know was the correct answer; if they attempted to answer them, experimenter reiterated should not guess, and asked again
  - End of questions told that they would know some answers, did not have to answer I don't know, and given example (what is your name)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Gee, Gregory, & Pipe (1999)

- Results:
  - Children in training condition made fewer incorrect responses to misleading questions.
  - But they also gave fewer correct responses to non-misleading questions!

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Gee, Gregory, & Pipe (1999)

- Study 2
- 51 9- to 11-year-olds
- "[T]he training package was extended to reinforce and encourage correct answers, while maintaining the training in giving 'don't know' responses and correcting the interviewer." (p. 121)
- Forced-choice and specification questions as in Study 1

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Gee, Gregory, & Pipe (1999)

- Decreased incorrect in response to misleading questions; no ill-effects on correct responses
- Error rate in response to misleading forced-choice questions
  - Standard 3.15/5 (62%)
  - Training 2.56/5 (52%)
- Error rate in response to misleading wh-questions
  - Standard 2/5 (40%)
  - Training .8/5 (16%)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Summary of Gee, Gregory, & Pipe

- I don't know training is effective if children are taught to say DK when they don't know *and to answer when they do*.
- Even with training, forced-choice questions still elicited high rates of error.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Saywitz and Moan-Hardie (1994)?

- Gee et al.: Saywitz & Moan-Hardie(1994) found...decreased commission errors for misleading yes/no questions when 7-year-old children were interviewed about a live event. (p. 112)...this pattern of results across the two studies is very similar to that found for Saywitz & Moan-Hardie, 1994 (p. 124).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Promise to tell the truth

- It's really important that you tell me the truth.
- Do you promise that you will tell me the truth?
- Will you tell me any lies?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Lyon, Malloy, Quas, & Talwar (2008)

- 198 4 to 7 year old children
- 99 girls, 99 boys
- 40% African-American, 44% Latino, 10% Caucasian
- All children had been removed from their parents' custody due to substantiated child maltreatment.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Procedure

- Interviewer administers Lyon-Saywitz Oath-Taking Competency Task.
- Interviewer leaves to obtain some papers.
- Confederate enters the room.
- 4 confederate conditions.
- Interviewer returns, blind to confederate condition.
- 3 truth induction conditions.
- Interviewer questions child.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Confederate Conditions

- Play: Confederate and child play with the coin and the Lego House.
- Play-warn: Same, only Confederate heavily coaches child to keep Lego House play a secret.
- No-Play: Confederate and child only play with the coin.
- No-play-coach: Same, only Confederate heavily coaches child to claim they played with the Lego House

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Truth Induction Conditions

- No instructions.
- Oath
  - It's VERY important that you tell me the truth. Can you PROMISE that you will tell me the truth? Will you TELL me any lies?
- General Reassurance
  - I talk to kids ALL THE TIME about things that make them feel bad. If something happened you feel bad or sad about, it's TOTALLY O.K., you won't get in any trouble with me at all. We can try to FIX it and make it better.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Interviewer questions child

- Free recall
- Truth Induction
- Repeated recall
- Yes-no questions (e.g., "Did you open any of the doors?")
- Suppositional questions (e.g., "When he opened the doors, was he happy or mad?")

---

---

---

---

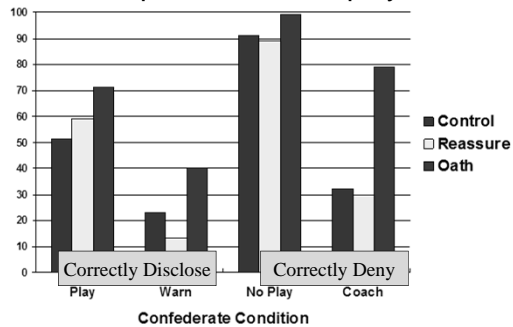
---

---

---



### Effects of truth induction on accuracy in response to repeated yes/no questions about play




---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Truth Induction Case Study: Terrell (6 years old)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Other research supporting promising to tell the truth

- Talwar et al. (2002, 2004)
- Lyon & Dorado (2008)
- Evans & Lee (2010)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Russell (2006)

### BEST PRACTICES IN CHILD FORENSIC INTERVIEWS: INTERVIEW INSTRUCTIONS AND TRUTH-LIE DISCUSSIONS

*Amy Russell*<sup>1</sup>

100

JOURNAL OF PUBLIC LAW & POLICY

[Vol. 28:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Russell (2006)

- “Based upon the body of research reviewed and discussed in this article, interview instructions...are not warranted at the outset of a forensic interview.” p. 129

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Russell (2006), reviewing Saywitz & Moan-Hardie (1994)

The results indicate that children who received the training were less likely to submit to suggestive question techniques; however, *findings also demonstrate that children who received the resistance training reduced their correct responses to correctly leading questions.* (p. 105, citing Saywitz & Moan-Hardie at p. 420)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Anderson et al. (2010) make the same claim

- Saywitz and Moan-Hardie's study indicated instructions resulted in a reduction of correct responses. Anderson et al. at 245 (citing Saywitz & Moan-Hardie at 420-421).

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

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Actual findings in Saywitz & Moan-Hardie (1994)

"[T]he modified intervention *did not* have the effect of lowering correct responses to any question types (p. 420).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Actual findings in Saywitz & Moan-Hardie (1994)

- Errors in response to correctly leading questions, pre-test vs. post test:
  - Instructions 4% to 17%
  - Control 6% to 20%
- In other words, instructions did NOT increase the likelihood of error.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Actual findings in Saywitz & Moan-Hardie (1994)

- Study 1 did find that instructions reduced correct responding, and Study 2 corrected for this effect
  - “there was more opportunity and reinforcement for “telling the answer when you know the answer” in an effort to eliminate reduction in correct responses” (p. 419)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Russell (2006), reviewing Saywitz & Moan-Hardie (1994)

The results also indicate that a number of children who did not receive the resistance training were still able to indicate when they did not know or could not remember an answer (p.105, citing Saywitz & Moan-Hardie at p. 120).

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Actual results in Saywitz & Moan-Hardie (1994)

Percentage of time children answered “I don’t know” to different question types in control group (post-test):

Misleading: 5% Instruction: 16%

Correctly leading: 2% Instruction: 10%

Specific: 7% Instruction: 18%

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Russell (2006)

- “A perhaps more appropriate use of interview instructions is to employ them as the situation presents.”
- Any problems with this approach?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Problems with opportunistic instructions

- Children will infrequently respond “I don’t know” spontaneously.
- When children *do* respond “I don’t know,” this may reflect reluctance.
- Reinforcement is likely to *encourage non-responsiveness*.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### For more information

- Google “bepress lyon” for reprints of the Ten-step interview, other practitioner guides, and articles.
- Google “MRCAC Tom Lyon Spring 2013” to sign up for online viewing of lectures.
- You can reach me at [tlyon@law.usc.edu](mailto:tlyon@law.usc.edu)

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---