

# Narrative Practice in Forensic Interviews of Children

*A Bibliography*



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## **Scope**

The bibliography lists articles, reports, chapters and books covering topics related to narrative practice in the child forensic interview.

## **Organization**

This bibliography lists publications in date-descending order. Links are provided to open access publications.

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# Narrative Practice in Forensic Interviews of Children

## A Bibliography

Yi, M., & Lamb, M. E. (2018). The effects of narrative practice on children's testimony and disclosure of secrets. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 32*(3), 326-336.

The present study explored the effects of different types of narrative practices on the accuracy and abundance of information elicited from children and the disclosure of secrets. Seventy-one children ages 3–6 years experienced a scripted encounter with a photographer; then they were interviewed about the event after participating in one of four different narrative practices. The narrative practices comprised either a discussion of topics drawing from episodic memory or topics drawing from semantic memory. Further, either open-ended prompts were used during the practice narratives or directive questions were used. The episodic topics were related to past experienced events, whereas the semantic topics consisted of general knowledge about what they liked to do. The results showed that children who were trained to respond to open-ended prompts early in the interview responded more informatively later, but the specificity of the topics had no effect on their accuracy and informativeness. Neither the topics nor types of questions had effects on the results of disclosure.

Danby, M. C., Brubacher, S. P., Sharman, S. J., & Powell, M. B. (2017). The effects of one versus two episodically oriented practice narratives on children's reports of a repeated event. *Legal and Criminological Psychology, 22*(2), 442-454.

Previous research has found that children's reports of repeated events can be influenced by the presence and type of narrative practice in which they engage immediately prior to substantive recall. In particular, children's reports have been shown to benefit from practice providing narratives about an autobiographical repeated event. A gap remains, however, with regard to understanding whether practice narrating one episode of a repeated event encourages children to think about unique features of specific episodes, or whether practice of two episodes is required. The current study addressed this gap. Five- to nine-year-olds (N = 167) experienced four classroom activity sessions and were later interviewed. Children provided a practice narrative about either one or two episodes of an autobiographical repeated event prior to discussing individual episodes of the activities. Older children recalled more details from the activities when they had practised

recalling two episodes compared to one episode. Younger children did not benefit from the second episodic practice. Many similarities were observed across conditions for children of all ages. Older children were likely receptive to the subtle differences between conditions because of their advanced cognitive abilities. Interviewers may assist older children to recall a larger amount of information if they first provide practice recalling two episodes of an autobiographical repeated event. However, a practice narrative about one episode may be sufficient to assist many children should two-episode practice be unfeasible or interviewees are too young to benefit from recall of a second episode.

Anderson, G. D., Anderson, J. N., & Gilgun, J. F. (2014). The influence of narrative practice techniques on child behaviors in forensic interviews. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse, 23*(6), 615-634.

During investigations of child sexual abuse, forensic interviewers must maintain a delicate balance of providing support for the child while collecting forensic evidence about the abuse allegation required for credible evidence for court purposes. The use of narrative practice techniques can achieve both goals by creating conditions that facilitate the possibility that children will feel safe enough to provide detailed descriptions of the alleged abuse. This article reports findings from an evaluation of a change in practice using the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol in which narrative practice techniques were incorporated into the interview format. Findings show that children provided more detailed accounts of abuse when interviewers used open-ended questions and supportive statements through narrative practice.

Lyon, T. D., Wandrey, L., Ahern, E., Licht, R., Sim, M. P., & Quas, J. A. (2014). Eliciting maltreated and nonmaltreated children's transgression disclosures: Narrative practice rapport building and a putative confession. *Child Development, 85*(4), 1756-1769.

This study tested the effects of narrative practice rapport building (asking open-ended questions about a neutral event) and a putative confession (telling the child an adult “told me everything that happened and he wants you to tell the truth”) on 4- to 9-year-old maltreated and nonmaltreated children’s reports of an interaction with a stranger who asked them to keep toy breakage a secret (n = 264). Only one third of children who received no interview manipulations disclosed breakage;

in response to a putative confession, one half disclosed. Narrative practice rapport building did not affect the likelihood of disclosure. Maltreated children and nonmaltreated children responded similarly to the manipulations. Neither narrative practice rapport building nor a putative confession increased false reports.

Price, H. L., Roberts, K. P., & Collins, A. (2013). The quality of children's allegations of abuse in investigative interviews containing practice narratives. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 2(1), 1-6.

To enhance the accuracy and completeness of children's testimony, recommendations have included implementing a practice narrative, during which children are prepared for their role as informative witnesses before discussing the allegations. In the present study, we aimed to systematically examine interviewer behaviour and the informativeness of children's testimony in a field setting. As predicted, interviewers posed fewer prompts, proportionally more open-ended prompts, and children provided proportionally more details in response to open-ended prompts in the substantive phase when preceded by a practice narrative than when no practice narrative was conducted. The relationship was enhanced when the practice narratives were conducted as recommended vs those that were conducted in a less open-ended manner. Together with experimental studies showing clear benefits of practice narratives on children's reports, these results underscore the value of a simple practice narrative as a means of enhancing the reliability of children's testimony.

Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2012). Narrative practice and the transformation of interview subjectivity. In J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Hostein, A. B. Marvasti, & K. D. McKinnery (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of interview research. The complexity of the craft* (pp. 27-44). Londres: Sage Publications.

Lyon, T. D., Ahern, E. C., & Scurich, N. (2012). Interviewing children versus tossing coins: Accurately assessing the diagnosticity of children's disclosures of abuse. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 21(1), 19-44.

We describe a Bayesian approach to evaluating children's abuse disclosures and review research demonstrating that children's disclosure of genital touch can be highly probative of sexual abuse,

with the probative value depending on disclosure spontaneity and children's age. We discuss how some commentators understate the probative value of children's disclosures by: confusing the probability of abuse given disclosure with the probability of disclosure given abuse, assuming that children formally questioned about sexual abuse have a low prior probability of sexual abuse, misstating the probative value of abuse disclosure, and confusing the distinction between disclosure and nondisclosure with the distinction between true and false disclosures. We review interviewing methods that increase the probative value of disclosures, including interview instructions, narrative practice, noncontingent reinforcement, and questions about perpetrator/caregiver statements and children's reactions to the alleged abuse.

Davies, G., Bull, R., Lamb, M. E., La Rooy, D. J., Malloy, L. C., & Katz, C. (2011). Practice Narratives. In M. E. Lamb, D. J. La Rooy, L. C. Malloy, & C. Katz (Eds.), *Children's Testimony: A Handbook of Psychological Research & Forensic Practice* (pp. 129-145). Chichester UK: Wiley and Sons.

Roberts, K. P., Brubacher, S. P., Powell, M. B., & Price, H. L. (2011). Practice narratives. In M. E. Lamb, D. J. La Rooy, C. Malloy, & Carmit Katz (Eds.), *Children's testimony: A handbook of psychological research and forensic practice* (pp.129-145.) West Sussex, UK: Wiley.

Lyon, T. D. (2010). Investigative interviewing of the child. In D. Duquette & A. Haralambie (Eds.), *Child Welfare Law and Practice* (2nd ed., pp. 87-109). Denver, CO: Bradford.

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.

Steele, L. C. (2010). [Narrative Practice \(What is it and Why is it Important?\): A Research to Practice Summary](#). Huntsville, AL: National Children's Advocacy Center.

Licht, R. C., Wandrey, L. E., Ahern, E. C., Cooper, A., Sim, M., Quas, J., & Lyon, T. D. (2009, August). The effect of rapport building and putative confessions upon maltreated and nonmaltreated children's disclosure of a minor transgression. In *CELS 2009 4th Annual Conference on Empirical Legal Studies Paper*.

This study examined the effects of rapport-building (open-ended narrative practice vs. closed ended questioning) and a putative confession (telling the child that an adult "told me everything that happened and he wants you to tell the truth") on 4- to 9-year-old maltreated and comparable non-maltreated children's reports of a minor transgression (N = 264). An adult engaged each child in play with a series of toys, two of which appeared to break in the child's hands. The adult warned the child that they should not have played with half the toys, including the broken toys, and asked the child to keep that play a secret. Children were questioned following either open ended narrative practice or closed-ended questioning using free recall and yes-no questions. Open-ended narrative practice increased children's productivity but did not affect the likelihood that they disclosed breakage. Putative confessions increased children's disclosure of breakage. Neither age nor maltreatment affected the results. The implications of the findings for questioning children about transgressions are discussed.

Sternberg, K. J., Lamb, M. E., Hershkowitz, I., Yudilevitch, L., Orback, Y., Esplin, P. W., & Hovav, M. (1997). Effects of introductory style on children's abilities to describe experiences of sexual abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 21(11), 1133-1146.

The goal of this study was to evaluate the relative effectiveness of two rapport-building techniques for eliciting information from children who made allegations of sexual abuse. Fourteen interviewers conducted 51 investigations of child sexual abuse with children ranging from 4.5 to 12.9 years of age. In 25 of the investigations, interviewers used a script including many open-ended utterances to establish rapport, whereas in 26 of the investigations the same interviewers used a rapport-building script involving many direct questions. Both rapport-building scripts took about 7 minutes to complete. All children were asked the same open-ended question to initiate the substantive phase of the interview. Children who had been trained in the open-ended condition



provided 2.5 times as many details and words in response to the first substantive utterance as did children in the direct introduction condition. Children in the open-ended condition continued to respond more informatively to open-ended utterances in the later (unscripted) portion of the interview. Two-thirds of the children mentioned the core details of the incident in their responses to the first substantive utterance and a further 20% mentioned core details more vaguely. These results demonstrate that children respond more informatively to an open-ended invitation when they have previously been trained to answer such questions rather than more focused questions. These results demonstrate the sensitivity of children to the goals and expectations of forensic interviewers. Structured interview protocols also increase the amount of information provided by young interviewees.