

APPROVAL PAGE

FORENSIC INTERVIEWING:

BEST PRACTICES WHEN WORKING WITH YOUNG CHILDREN (3-7 YEARS OLD)

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**Forensic Interviewing:
Best Practices When Working with Young Children (3-7 years old)**

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When I began my advanced education journey in 2015 at Carroll University, I anticipated that I wanted to be a medical examiner – so, I began my pre-med path. Throughout my undergraduate program I struggled to find my passion for medicine and began falling in love with the healing qualities of art. The transition from pre-med to psychology and fine art transpired through a great deal of prayer, reflection, and guidance from my greatest supporters. After graduation, I jumped into mental health where I fell in love with working with those healing from trauma. Through watching many patients grow and become empowered, I was empowered to continue my education to best serve victims of trauma, those struggling with mental illness and addiction. With the help of the educators at UW-Platteville, I was able to find my voice and passion for crisis work. For this, I am eternally grateful.

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Abstract

This research paper was written to examine the existing research and programs focused on the forensic interviewing of children, specifically children who are younger than seven years old. Existing research discussing child abuse and trauma, developmental capabilities of young children, and current interview components will be reviewed. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), CornerHouse, and the National Children's Advocacy Center (NCAC) will be compared to see what the standards of forensic interviewing look like through these widely respected programs. Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development will be used to assist in explaining the developmental abilities of children and why they have different capabilities in a forensic interview than older children. Bowlby's attachment theory will be discussed regarding how it explains the dangers of child abuse and the implications for forensic interviews. Through this thorough examination, recommendations will be made in regard to the components of a forensic interview of young children. These components include question type, the use of interview aids and drawings, and the use of multiple interviews.

Keywords: forensic interview, young children, child development, interview structure, controversial, question type, interview aids, multiple interviews, protocols, NICHD, CornerHouse, NCAC, theory of cognitive development, attachment theory

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Introduction

Forensic interviewing has made great strides in utilizing the best practices and protocols for working with children. Despite the advances, many interviewers still struggle with working with young children. Developmentally, children who are seven years old and younger are different in many capacities than older children. Children who are three to seven years old have difficulties with their memory, have short attention spans, limited language abilities, few life experiences, and are less likely to be believed when disclosing abuse (Cordisco Steele & National Children's Advocacy Center, 2015; Hritz et al., 2015). Children are often reluctant to share abuse, especially those younger than six years old. This reluctance stems from internal feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame, requests from others to keep secrets, fear of upsetting the non-abusive caregiver(s), having a loyalty to the abuser, and difficulties with their language capabilities (Magnusson, 2020). When an interviewer interviews a child than seven, the endure many difficulties.

Statement of the Problem

The difficulties interviewers endure are many. One predictor of difficulty is the suggestibility of children. This suggestibility derives from the vulnerability of children, especially those who have a lower aptitude (Hritz et al., 2015). Young children find it difficult to have a focused memory and search through their memories to retrieve the desired information (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention [OJJDP] et al., 2015). With this limitation, young children are more susceptible to false memories (Hritz et al., 2015). A child's memory capacity and their perception of an experience is determined by their age. Even with a limited memory, young children continue to experience other limitations and challenges due to the developmental disadvantages (OJJDP et al., 2015). They have a limited ability to make sense of their own

experiences, have less experience talking about their past experiences to others, and have a limited vocabulary, which can make verbalizing the abuse more difficult. Even with the limitations younger children face, children are not less accurate in their testimonies (Lamb et al., 2007).

The developmental limitations that children face make interviewing young children more difficult. Their verbal and mental limitations create a challenge when answering more open-ended questions (OJJDP et al., 2015). The use of open-ended questions is found in many forensic interviewing protocols, and they are used to gain valuable information (Lamb et al., 2007). Many professionals argue if these protocols are age appropriate. In the interviews, children face the challenges that occur due to their developmental stage, but also the structure of the interview. This causes children to be pushed beyond their capabilities (Middleton, 2017). The younger the child, the more at risk they are to maltreatment due to their vulnerabilities and inability to care for and speak for themselves (Cordisco Steele & National Children's Advocacy Center [NCAC], 2015). Young children, who are at an increased risk of abuse and maltreatment, require an interview structure that helps them disclose potential abuse. The development of a child is important to each forensic interview protocol. This development should not hinder children from coming forward, being believed, and supported throughout the process. So, despite the needed advancements made in the field, forensic interviewing needs to be reviewed and a protocol needs to be created in order to aid young children in being successful.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research paper will be to examine techniques currently used in forensic interviewing. These techniques will be found by analyzing previous studies, which have

been conducted on the effectiveness and necessity of aspects of forensic interviewing. The current protocols that are used in the field will be reviewed. The information gathered will be compiled to create a list of best practices to use when interviewing young children, three to seven years old.

Significance of the Study

This research paper will argue the current protocols which are used when forensically interviewing children should be tailored to younger children, three to seven years old, due to developmental differences of children. This research will be supported through the evaluation of protocols which are currently used in the field of forensic interviewing, including the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) protocol, CornerHouse, and National Children's Advocacy Center (NCAC). The protocols currently in place for interviewing children lack or are misled in many areas which are crucial to the accuracy and comfortability of younger children.

One of the most vital pieces of the interview is how questions are asked. It is crucial the interview is not suggestive, due to the suggestibility of young children (Hritz et al., 2015). When questions are asked in a suggestive manner or repeated, it is possible children will change their answers due to a fear of negative feedback (Hritz et al., 2015; Volpini et al., 2016). Suggestive questioning can also create false memories. The use of open-ended questions provides more accurate information. Open-ended questions and free-recall prompts have been found to allow young children to present accurate and detailed information, which is forensically important (Kulkofsky et al., 2007; Lamb et al., 2003). The manner in which young children are asked questions is important to the validity of their testimony.

Another piece of the interview, which is crucial when interviewing young children, is the use of visual aids. Depending on how an aid is used, it can both help and hinder the child's testimony. Anatomical dolls, body diagrams, and interviewer and child drawings are some of the most common aids used in forensic interviews (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). The use of aids is controversial, especially with younger children. On one side, the use of anatomical dolls and diagrams can trigger the child to recognize other body-related experiences. This can help a child disclose experiences with a small chance of false experiences. Others argue the use of dolls can be suggestive, leading, and put the testimony in jeopardy, especially when used with suggestive and leading questions (Perona et al., 2005). There is controversy surrounding the use of visual aids in interviewing models. Despite this controversy, the best use of interview aids is to introduce them after the disclosure of abuse during an interview to help clarify details of abuse (OJJDP et al., 2015, Perona et al., 2005).

Lastly, many professionals argue a single interview is ideal for children. In general, the use of multiple interviews can be harmful, as it can cause unnecessary trauma and stress on the child (OJJDP et al., 2015). However, this is not the case for young children. Using multiple interviews can also be beneficial. For children who are reluctant, traumatized, or do not possess the required language skills, multiple interviews can present the opportunity for the child to move at their own pace and become more comfortable with the process. With that, it is suggested that children who are reluctant to share, especially younger children, should be offered a maximum of three interviews. No more than three interviews should be utilized as Azzopardi and colleagues (2014) found no new information was obtained after the third interview.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine existing research of forensic interview protocols. It will argue that there is a great deal of disagreement in the field about what the ideal

forensic interview for young children is, with the hope to offer recommendations for best practices when interviewing children seven years of age and younger.

Literature Review

Child Abuse & Trauma in Young Children

Child abuse includes many kinds of abuse, all resulting in emotional harm and or physical harm. Child abuse is comprised of emotional abuse, child neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. Unfortunately, child abuse affects many children. In 2020, 1,750 children in the United States died of abuse and neglect (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). Of all children who experience abuse, young children are especially vulnerable to abuse because of their developmental differences (Cordisco Steele & National Children's Advocacy Center, 2015; Lyon et al., 2017, as cited in Durante et al., 2022). Young children need assistance caring for themselves and are still learning as their brains develop. This reliance on others creates a vulnerability.

Symptoms of child abuse are difficult to identify as they are also linked to general child development, behavioral issues, or environmental issues. Some symptoms a young child has experienced abuse include: Fear of separation from caregiver, excessive crying or screaming, poor appetite, weight loss, nightmares, anxiety, guilt, shame, and difficulty concentrating (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2022). All victims of trauma or abuse react differently to their experiences, including young children (OJJDP et al., 2015). Due to the variation of reactions and symptoms of abuse, identifying abused children is especially challenging for professionals. This can result in many children not getting help until later in life.

When a child is abused, the abuse endured can cause a child to experience trauma. According to the American Psychological Association (n.d.), trauma is an emotional response to a distressing event. Childhood trauma can have a detrimental impact on a child's education, mental and physical health, and involvement in the justice system. The child is also at risk of mental illness. For nearly each mental health disorder, trauma is a risk factor (SAMHSA, 2022). These long-term effects are detrimental but can be limited, or even eliminated, if a child is professionally helped. This begins with someone identifying the abuse, or the child disclosing to someone.

Disclosure

In order for a child to receive help the child would need to disclose abuse or a concerned bystander (typically an adult) would need to share concerns or evidence of abuse. Disclosure is incredibly important. It is not uncommon for a child to be the only victim of abuse (Lamb et al., 2003). From a legal standpoint, the testimony of a child is important. It is often the case that the only evidence of child abuse is a child's testimony, as physical evidence can be limited or non-existent (Hritz et al., 2015). Some factors which may encourage a child to disclose abuse are educational programs, someone asking the child about abuse, providing an opportunity for the child to share their experiences, perceived support from others, and a supportive response when the child talks about their experiences (Happel, 2016; Lamaigre et al., 2017; Lamb et al., 2008; McEvaney et al., 2012, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). The disclosure of abuse from children may come less directly, over an unspecified period of time, in behaviors, discussions, and nonverbal cues (Alaggia, 2004, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015).

For a variety of reasons, children do not always disclose abuse. These reasons can include the feelings of guilt and shame, fear of upsetting an adult in their life, self-blame, loyalty to the

abuser, perceived consequences, threats/bribes, perceived lack of support, distress, or a lack of memory of the abuse (Faller, 2016; Lemaigre et al., 2017, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). There may also be pressures from adults in the child's life to not talk about the abuse (Malloy et al., 2007, as cited in Karni-Visel et al., 2021). If the abuse is sexual in nature, there is a greater difficulty in disclosure. Less than half (42-50%) of children who experience sexual abuse disclose the abuse to a professional when interviewed (Olafson & Lederman, 2006, as cited in Azzopardi et al., 2014). The disclosure of sexual abuse is even less likely if the victim is male, or a younger child (Katz, 2015). Depending on the child's symptoms of abuse, they may be unable to share the details of abuse because of memory loss or dissociation (Ziegler, 2002, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). Many individuals may not disclose the abuse until adulthood. Sixty to eighty percent of abused children wait until they are legal adults to tell someone else of their abuse (Alaggia, 2010, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). This disclosure, if it occurs as a child, would be shared in a forensic interview.

Forensic Interviews

In a forensic interview, children are able to share their experiences in a safe place, which is a very rare opportunity. Historically, child abuse victims were rarely given the opportunity to share their experiences in an appropriate way (Lamb et al., 2007). Due to this need, the forensic interview was created. The definition of a forensic interview is as follows: "A forensic interview of a child is a developmentally sensitive and legally sound method of gathering factual information regarding allegations of abuse or exposure to violence" (OJJDP et al., 2015, p. 3). Forensic interviews can take place in police stations, schools, hospitals, and other official locations (Brown & Lamb, 2015, as cited in Durante et al., 2022). These locations are not ideal as they can be intimidating and frightening to children. Child advocacy centers were put into

place to provide a non-threatening and comfortable place for children to be best supported. Forensic interviews are in place to reduce re-traumatization to gather information without coercion. The goal of the interview is to have the child recall information verbally (OJJDP et al., 2015). This verbal testament is recorded and then presented to the court (Goodman, 2006, as cited in Middleton, 2017). This bypasses the need for the child to be interviewed in court, which can reduce the risk of re-traumatization. Allowing the child to be videotaped creates an emotionally safe environment. The child may feel less threatened to talk to one individual, rather than an entire courtroom, and the child does not interact with their abuser. The child's testimony is a crucial part of a child abuse case.

The information gathered in a forensic interview varies. Some topics which can be utilized in the forensic interview are the child's current living situation, explaining the disclosure process, the incident, repeated abuse, any physical allegations, history of abuse, inconsistencies, and any recanting (Perona et al., 2005). Children are often asked about clothing or the nature of touching during an interview to determine whether touching occurred and if the touching was abusive (Stolzenberg & Lyon, 2016, as cited in Stolzenberg et al., 2017). Reliable information can be gathered in forensic interviews (Brown & Lamb, 2015, as cited in Durante et al., 2022). Many parties may benefit from the information gathered of a forensic interview. These parties can include law enforcement, prosecutors, child protection investigators, child protection attorneys, victim advocates, mental health professionals, and medical practitioners (Jones et al., 2005, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015).

This interview is conducted by a competently trained, neutral professional utilizing research and practice-informed techniques as part of a larger investigative process" (OJJDP et al., 2015). Depending on the jurisdiction, many different trained professionals can conduct a

forensic interview. These professionals include forensic interviewers, law enforcement, child welfare workers, or anyone else who has been trained in the forensic interviewing (McCoy & Keen, 2014, as cited in Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). A forensic interviewer is a member of a multidisciplinary team whose job is to obtain the child's statement about their experience where there is suspected child abuse or neglect (Lamb et al., 1998, as cited in Middleton, 2017). The goal of the forensic interviewer is to gather the statement in a sensitive, objective, and legally defensible manner. These interviewers are often trained in multiple models (Stephens et al., 2012, as cited in Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017).

Forensic interviews have changed drastically since they began being widely used in the 1980s, as our knowledge of child abuse and awareness has increased (OJJDP et al., 2015). Professionals are now able to make a greater effort in most effectively interviewing the behalf of children. Even with these advancements, there are still many challenges which are faced in the field.

Challenges of Forensically Interviewing Young Children

Forensic interviews still endure challenges which are specific to the population that is served. Children are challenging subjects to interview and rely on for life-changing information. Children are perceived as unreliable (Lyon et al., 2017, as cited in Durante et al., 2022). Forensic interviewers face the challenge of interviewing these 'unreliable' sources and finding the details which could have legal implications (Cordisco Steele & National Children's Advocacy Center, 2015). For forensic interviewers, the hardest age group of children to interview are those who are three to five years old. Young children, those under seven years of age, are most challenging to interview due to the developmental difficulties. These developmental difficulties include their memory and language abilities, reliability, suggestibility, and ability to be truthful.

Developmentally, children change rapidly as they age, especially in the first few years. Because of a child's developing brain and abilities, some forensic interviewers struggle to interview younger children (Walker, 2013, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). Young children can get confused with simple concepts (like time, amounts, etc.) and often use words before they know what they mean. Children are more literal in thinking, understanding, and speaking than adults (Hewitt, 1999; Piaget, 1977 as cited in Malloy et al., 2017). As children grow, they begin to develop the ability to narrate, which is a milestone that allows a child to retain and retrieve memories (Kleinknecht & Beike, 2001, as cited in Kulkofsky et al., 2007). Narration is an important part of an interview, as it is how information is gathered most of the time. Due to the changing linguistic abilities of children as they age, it is important the interviewer uses developmentally appropriate language. If that occurs, young children can express their perspectives and their own opinions (Clark & Statham, 2005; Dayan & Ziv, 2012, as cited in Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). Researchers need to remember many of the same qualities of adult interviews are also present in the interviews of children. These can include building rapport, using understandable questions, using the terms that are used by the interviewees, and active listening (Arksey & Knight, 1999, as cited in Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). The United Nations (UN) emphasizes the importance of children expressing their views and having influence on their lives (UN, 1989, as cited in Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). A forensic interview provides the child with that option.

Even with what is known about child development, researchers are still challenged with gathering qualitative data on preschool aged children (Hershkowitz et al., 2012, as cited in Malloy et al., 2017). Some professionals recommend that children who are younger than three years of age should be assessed to determine if they are skilled enough to participate in the

interview (Hewitt, 1997, as cited in Perona et al., 2005). However, each child is different, and for many, age is not a good predictor of one's abilities (Wilson & Powell, 2001, as cited in Korkman et al., 2008). A child's developmental age should be focused on, rather than their chronological age (Brubacher et al., 2019, as cited in Magnusson, 2020).

Memory

One challenge for forensic interviewers is the memory capability of young children. One's memory recall is crucial to provide legal testimony for children (Otgaar & Howe, 2018, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). The age and developmental abilities of a child strongly influence how a child perceives an experience and how much of the information can be stored in their memory (Pipe & Salmon, 2002, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). Some argue a child cannot remember their early childhood (before five years old) (Volpini et al., 2016). However, children begin developing autobiographical memories around two years old, which means they are now able to narrate their personal experiences (Courage et al., 2004; Fivush, 2011; Howe et al., 1994, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). Courts require that children are able to pinpoint time and place for any witnessed events (Goodman & Melinder, 2007, as cited in Middleton, 2017). A child having autobiographical memory is an important ability to possess in order to describe any abuse events. Depending on a child's age, young children have vastly different memory capabilities.

As discussed earlier, children who experience abuse may experience trauma. A child who has experienced trauma may remember chunks of snapshots of an event, called flashbulb memory, rather than remembering it in a linear fashion (Berliner et al., 2003, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). The memory of a young child is questioned by many. When a child has experienced trauma, their memory suffers even more, as the memory can be distorted or impaired due to trauma (Feiring & Tasca, 2005, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). When a child has endured abuse,

their memories can become scrambled. Free recall, or the ability to explain events in a specific order, is often limited (Faller, 2007, as cited in Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). Depending on the age of the child, and experiences of that child, their ability to describe an uncommon experience is especially challenging. In a forensic interview, children are asked to remember details of events which are not common in a conventional conversation (Lamb & Brown, 2006, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). This can create a challenge for children. For example, children are not typically hearing and engaging in discussions which involve the topics of touching and abuse, so when a child is asked to remember such details, they may be at a greater disadvantage than an older child.

Despite what some argue, the memory of young children is an incredible tool. Young children have stronger memories for repeated events compared to single occurring events (Tang, 2006, as cited in Cordisco Steele & National Children's Advocacy Center, 2015). Sadly, if a child endures more abuse, there is a higher probability of the child remembering it (Melnik & Bruck, 2004, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015). A child's memory can also be strengthened if a neutral, open-ended interview occurs shortly after an event. The memory is then protected against forgetting, prevented from errors of commission, and encourages the mentioning of previously unmentioned details in a later recall.

Even in adults, a memory is often not an exact version of an event (Loftus, 2017, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). After abuse, no one's memory will be a perfect. Research is conflicted about children's memory capabilities. Generally, young children are able to remember experiences, but do not have the verbal abilities to share their experience. This can be informative through their reactions to environments, people, and objects, which presents another challenge.

Language

Another barrier forensic interviewers encounter is the language capabilities of young children. For many children, there needs to be some linguistic skills developed in order to report abuse (Saywitz et al., 1999; Walker, 1994, as cited in Korkman et al., 2008). The linguistic abilities of children differ depending on their age. Younger children struggle to understand concepts. One being of great importance in forensic interviews is time. Depending on the age of the child, they may have no concept of time, the words to use to describe time, or have difficulty explaining something has happened numerous times over the course of a specific period. This difficulty in verbalizing the concept of time is also tied to a child's remembrance capabilities.

A child's language ability is related to their language comprehension. This connection allows the child to process new information and increase the child's likelihood of encoding that information into memory (Ornstein et al., 2004, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015). A child will have a harder time describing a memory if their language and vocabulary are at a lower ability (Hritz et al., 2015). The language capabilities of children change drastically as they grow older. Children are unable to report any memories before they reach the preoperational stage, around two years old (Brubacher et al., 2019; Peterson & Rideout, 1998, as cited in Magnusson, 2020).

There are other linguistic skills which are important in the context of forensic interviews. Children's linguistic abilities grow at an exponential rate in their early years. Children around 16-18 months are able to put words into pairs, where by six years old, children know about 10,000 to 14,000 words, known as the 'vocabulary spurt' (Saxton, 2017, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). The vocabulary abilities of a child allow a child to describe something that has occurred. Young children are able to verbally disclose abuse, specifically sexual abuse, and they have less awareness of taboos of sexual topics (Hlavka et al., 2010). This is one benefit to a child's

language as they do not feel self-conscious talking about difficult topics, unless someone else has placed that taboo on them (Aldridge & Wood, 1998, as cited in Korkman et al., 2008). As a child discloses abuse, it is important they can hold a conversation. Children as young as three understand the conventions of a conversation – that a question requires an answer. When a child talks, depending on their age, they may struggle with understanding certain conventions of language.

One challenge young children face is the use of plural and singular to describe something. Battin and colleagues (2012, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015) found preschool-aged children are prone to using plural descriptions when describing a single perpetrator. This can make gathering a child's testimony difficult due to not knowing if there was more than one abuser. Children are also limited in their ability to tell the source of information (Ceci & Bruck, 1993, 1995, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). Young children interpret language literally and do not understand words have more than one meaning (Hewitt, 1999; Walker, 2013, as cited in Cordisco Steele & National Children's Advocacy Center, 2015). It is then up to the interviewer to ask clarifying questions, ask the question in different ways, and to take their time in the interview to ensure that the interviewer and child understand each other to the best of their abilities.

The language abilities of a child not only vary based on age, but also their experiences with language. A child's language ability while in preschool greatly depends on how involved parents, teachers, and other caregivers are at engaging the child in conversation and activities (Davies, 2011; Heath, 1983, as cited in Cordisco Steele & National Children's Advocacy Center, 2015). This may make interviewing uneducated or isolated children even more challenging. A child's language abilities are important in both the sharing and comprehension of a conversation. It is also seen as connected to their competency and reliability (Hritz et al., 2015).

Reliability

Some people do not believe children are reliable sources of information. Past research found children, specifically young children, were incompetent and dependent (Elden, 2013, as cited in Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). Research shows children are able to provide detailed accounts (Saywitz, et al., 1993, as cited in Korkman et al., 2008). A child's accuracy may depend more on the interviewer's ability to communicate with the child rather than the child's abilities. Many professionals challenge the idea that child can be a reliable source of information due to their suggestibility.

Suggestibility

A child's developmental attributes make a child's testimony susceptible to manipulation (Lyon et al., 2017, as cited in Durante et al., 2022). Suggestibility, defined by Ceci and Bruck (1993, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015, p. 4), is "the degree to which children's encoding, storage, retrieval, and reporting of events can be influenced by a range of social and psychological factors." Individuals that the child feels has power over them can influence the child to alter their testimony, making the child suggestible to outside influence (Hritz et al., 2015). False reports can occur in a child abuse investigation through the lies from the child or through the false suggestions or pressures which are placed on the child by someone who has influence over the child (usually an adult). Children may share the wrong information due to fear of retaliation, a threat and not understanding the difference between their truth and someone else's lies. Children learn from a young age that many questions which are asked by adults are 'test questions' (Brooker 2001; Hatch, 1990; Theobald et al., 2015, as cited in Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). These questions are used to assess young children's knowledge. Because of this interaction and power dynamic, children wish to please the adult by providing the 'right' answer.

This desire to give the ‘right’ answer directly influences how a child answers questions in a forensic interview.

Many researchers have researched the suggestibility of children. Many of these studies looked at how children responded to suggestibility in the interview itself (Ceci et al., 2007a, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015). These studies have found data which prove even one suggestion in an interview can taint a child’s accuracy in an interview and subsequently future interviews. Hritz (2014, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015) found when a child is asked to make a false accusation by an interviewer, even when the child is told it was a mistake, the child will continue using the false accusation in future interviews. Young children fail to correct false suggestions (Battin et al., 2012, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015). It has also been found that the younger the child, the more likely they are to agree to what the adult had said (Volpini et al., 2016). This makes young children especially vulnerable to suggestibility. Research also shows young children, compared to older children, are more susceptible to misleading questions and false memories (Ackerman, 1994; Ackil & Zaragoza, 1995; Bjorklund et al., 2000; Bruck & Ceci, 1999; Reyna & Kiernan, 1994, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015). The suggestibility of young children varies depending on their age. Children who are five to six years-old are more accurate in recalling information, able to give more detail, and are less susceptible to suggestive influence compared to three- to four-year-olds (Magnusson, 2020). As cited above, there are quite a few studies which prove young children are incredibly susceptible to suggestion in and out of the interview.

Despite the research which shows young children are highly suggestible, there is some research which contradicts those findings. In one study, it was found when there is a ‘meaning connection,’ younger children may be less suggestible (Brainerd et al., 2008, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015). This ‘meaning connection’ refers to the connection which one makes as to the

meaning or importance of something is determined. Due to older children having more meaning connectedness, they are more suggestible than younger children.

An example of this reverse developmental trend can be seen in an experiment by Ross and colleagues (2006, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015). In this experiment, children were asked to be an eyewitness to identify the thief of a wallet. Five-year-old children were less likely (0.18%) to falsely identify a male teacher as the thief, compared to the 11-years-olds (0.64%); the 11-year-olds were more vulnerable to suggestion based on the conscious inference that was made. Developmental age may not be the only factor of suggestibility. Price and Connolly (2013, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015) found children who experienced a trauma event once were less suggestible than a child who experienced the event more than once. This shows children who are abused once may be more resistant to suggestion than those who have endured abuse many times.

Overall, children can be coached into sharing false information when interviewed (Talwar et al., 2018, as cited in Durante et al., 2022). This coaching can be done unintentionally by someone inside or outside of the interview. Children are inherently suggestible, so it is up to the interviewer to have a deep understanding of child development and to ask clarifying questions to better understand what the child knows to be true, and what the child was coached to say in the interview.

Truthfulness

Paired with the suggestibility of a child is often the truthfulness of a child. The ability to lie is a skill which children begin to develop very early in life (Lee, 2013, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). Children begin developing their lie-telling abilities in early childhood. By the age of 5,

children are already forming their judgements of morality, which is often formed by their caregivers (Dunn, 2006, as cited in Cordisco Steele & NCAC, 2015). This can look like sharing, being nice to others, and saying 'I'm sorry'. Young children will lie for many reasons. In preschool, children begin to lie to protect others (Talwar & Crossman, 2012, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). Starting at age 2, children begin to be able to lie about their misdeeds and to gain a reward/avoid punishment (Talwar & Cross Man, 2012; Talwar & Lee, 2008, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). In order to lie to avoid punishment, there needs to be some mental planning (Evand & Lee, 2013, as cited in Cordisco Steele & National Children's Advocacy Center, 2015; Talwar & Lee, 2002, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). Preschoolers are not able to plan to lie, so the lies are usually easy to identify, often making their lies unsuccessful.

But what makes a child's lies easy to detect? Based on the results of Durante et al.'s (2022) experiment of a child's truth-telling regarding a toy breaking, it can be interpreted that a child who is being dishonest is more careful in the language used, reflecting the interviewer's language. Some research disagrees and finds children to be believable when lying. Children who give false reports are able to speak emotionally and sincerely about the event (Ceci et al., 1994; Leichtman & Ceci, 1995, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015). Does this mean that children are good liars?

A forensic interviewer would hope that the child would be truthful during an interview. Determining the truthfulness of a child may be a more challenging task than one would think, even with professional training (Leichtman & Ceci, 1995, as cited in Hritz et al., 2015). Trained professionals cannot distinguish a false report from a true report. However, Gongola and colleagues (2018; 2020, as cited in Durante et al., 2022) found adults are often accurate in predicting the truthfulness of a child, with an average accuracy of 54%. They also found adults

were more biased towards believing a child was being truthful rather than dishonest. These contradicting findings could mean either children rarely lie, adults are simply guessing if a child is telling the truth, or children are very good at hiding whether or not they are lying. No matter the reason, it is up to the forensic interviewer to do their best in determining if the child is lying. If the child is talking about an event which they would not know general knowledge of, it is highly unlikely a false allegation of abuse came from the child's mind, and more likely to be based in suggestive influence (Ceci & Bruck, 1995, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). Interviewers should investigate child's allegation to determine if the allegation came from the child's experiences or from the mouth of someone else.

Forensic Interview Structure

In a forensic interview, it is expected a child is able to provide their testimony in a safe place. When the recommended interview procedures are used, even young children are able to provide quality information (Sternberg et al., 2001). While this should be promising news, there are many examples in research which show forensic interviewers do not follow research-based recommendations, despite the research being widely proclaimed (Lamb et al., 2007). Even with an ideal interview structure, it may be at the fault of the interviewer for a child's limited capabilities. Despite this, there are ideal interview structures. All interview protocols are different but share three phases: the rapport-building phase, substantive phase, and the closure phase.

The first phase, the rapport building phase, is to build rapport with the child and make the child feel more comfortable with the setting (Durante et al., 2022). During this phase, the interviewer asks open-ended questions to get to know the child and make the child more comfortable, all while acclimating the child to the interview structure. Most describe the rapport

building phase as the time in which the interviewer goes over expectations, rules, instructions, and orienting messages for the interviewer (this does vary depending on the interview protocol being used). Interview instructions are deemed best practice in forensic interviewing, as it prepares a child to interact with a new adult (APSAC, 2012, as cited in Anderson et al., 2016). This interaction typically does not take long. In a study performed by Dickinson and colleagues (2015), 98% of interview instructions were given in 4 minutes or less. It has been found when the instructions are used at the beginning of the interview, as well as when the opportunity arises during the interview, children are more autonomous in answering the interviewer's questions (Anderson et al., 2016).

One instruction which is given during the rapport building phase is described as the 'I don't know' instruction (Gee et al., 1999; Saywitz et al., 1999; Waterman & Blades, 2011, as cited in Anderson et al., 2016). This orienting message prepares children to correct the interviewer and has been found to improve a child's participation in the interview. By allowing a child to tell the interviewer that they may not understand a question or concept, as well as allowing the interviewer to tell the child that they were not at the event like the child, ensures that confusion and clarification are welcome for both parties (Anderson et al., 2016). One challenge interviewers face if this orienting message is not used, is that young children will not say 'I don't know' and are more likely to guess unless instructed to say 'I don't know' (Peterson et al., 1999, as cited in Laimon & Poole, 2008).

Due to the truthfulness of children, many protocols include the truth versus lie discussion in the rapport building phase (Lyon & Evans, 2014; Lyon & Dorado, 2008; Talwar et al., 2002, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). Including this discussion in the interview structure has been found to decrease the number of false statements made. The truth versus lie discussion is

mandated in some states as an oath for the children (Russel, 2006, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). Overall, these instructions set the precedent that children should tell the truth when testifying.

Children need more than just an adult to review the rules and expectations. Many children require practice to ensure they understand the rules being asked of them, specifically those younger than 8 years old (Scoboria, 2013, as cited in Anderson et al., 2016). Some believe young children have difficulty answering questions regarding ground rules. This perception was disproved, as children were able to answer the questions but struggled to answer numerous questions asked at once (Dickinson et al., 2015). Allowing a child to practice their understanding of the guidelines presented is crucial. Ellis et al. (2003, as cited in Anderson et al., 2016) found that preschool aged children were at high risk for suggestibility and had lower accuracy when the rules provided were not paired with practice opportunities. This shows how important practicing the rules after providing the expectations is to young children.

The practice of the instructions looks different depending on the type of instruction being given (McWilliams, et al., 2021). For example, when practicing the use of 'I don't know', an interviewer may ask a series of questions which the child will/will not know the answer to. This can look like, 'What color is the sky?' [a question the child would know the answer to] and 'What kind of pet do I have?' [a question the child would not know the answer to]. This presents the interviewer the opportunity to correct the child if they are not understanding the use of 'I don't know.' For the truth versus lie portion of the instructions, depending on the age of the child, the interviewer might ask the child if they know the difference between the truth and the lie, asking them to define truth and lie, and/or give examples of truths and lies. This may also include talking about the consequences of lying or the importance of telling the truth.

Lastly, another way the interview may prepare the child for the interviewer is through narrative practice (APSAC, 2012; Saywitz & Camparo, 2009; Saywitz et al, 2011, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). This can look like the interviewer asking the child to describe their morning routine, how to make their favorite food, or how to do a chore. The interviewer will ask the child to give these narratives with immense detail. The use of narrative practice, or episodic memory training, shows the child the level of detail needed for the abuse questions, as well as gets the child used to this type of questioning. Narrative practice also allows the interviewer to better understand the child's language ability.

During the rapport-building phase, the review and practicing of the interview instructions is most beneficial for younger children (APSAC, 2012; Saywitz & Camparo, 2009; Saywitz et al., 2011, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). For young children, the use of interview instructions and practice best prepares the child to go into the substantive phase.

The next phase of the forensic interview, the substantive phase, is the main part of the interview, often taking up the most time. During this part of the interview, the interviewer begins asking questions which pertain to the investigation, which is often called incident recall (Durante et al., 2022). During the recall, children are asked general questions like, 'Can you tell me why you are here?' This type of question will allow the child to begin narrating. The questions may become more specific as more detail or clarification is needed. Flee and Li (2016, as cited in Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019), found interviews were more successful when using a dialogue format, rather than question and answer. The use of dialogue helps the child feel more comfortable and not interrogated.

The final phase of the interview is the closure phase. The closure phase brings an end to an emotional conversation (OJJDP et al., 2015). This is done by asking the child if they have any

other information that they would like to share, if they have any questions, to thank the child for the effort, and to talk about any safety plans and any other educational materials.

Role of the Interviewer

The role of the interviewer, no matter the protocol, is to gather information and support the child. Those two roles are done in various ways. To gather information, an interviewer can focus on the child – their verbal and non-verbal communication. A child’s body language, facial expressions, and silence are equally important to the interview process (Clark, 2010, as cited in Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). A child’s response, or lack thereof, can give the interviewer quite a bit of information and can help guide the conversation (OJJDP et al., 2015). If a child becomes disoriented or distressed during an interview, the interviewer must not force the child to share details, as it can retraumatize them. It is important to keep the interview as neutral as possible. Children are rarely in neutral conditions while being forensically interviewed (Bruck & Ceci, 1999; Ceci & Bruck, 1993, 1995; London et al., 2005; Mazzoni, 2000; Scullin & Ceci, 2001, as cited in Volpini et al., 2016). When a child is in a neutral space, they are less likely to feel pressured and are more willing to share information (Ceci & Bruck, 1995; Faller, 2007; Teoh & Lamb, 2013, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). One way the space can remain neutral is if the interviewer encourages the child to be the most accurate and complete when disclosing information. The interviewer should not be suggestive or leading in any manner. This will result in the child being as open as possible. When a child feels like someone wants to listen to them, they are more likely to be open (Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). An interviewer should share with the child that they are interested in hearing the opinions and experiences of the child, and that the child’s views matter. When this open and welcoming environment is created, there is the greatest possibility for free recall. This also limits the interviewer’s influence on a child’s

recollection of memories (Lieb et al., 1997, as cited in Perona et al., 2005). To gather the most accurate information, it is necessary when an interviewer is describing people, places, or things, that the use of vague terms (it, they, there, etc.) are avoided and the specific names (i.e. dad, school, pajamas, etc.) are used instead (Brennan, 1995, as cited in Korkman et al., 2008). This will help mitigate any confusion during the discussion.

Besides gathering accurate and important information, the support given to a child is the next most important tool which an interviewer can use. An interviewer providing support is crucial in helping a child be more comfortable in the interview setting (Hershkowitz et al., 2006, as cited in Ahern et al., 2014). This support is given through the interviewer using encouraging statements, compliments, agreeing phrases, and nodding (Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). These types of skills can increase the number of a responses a child gives. The support during the interview has also been found to create an environment where children are more accurate and less suggestible (Cornah & Memon, 1996; Greenstock & Pipe, 1996, 1997; Moston, 1992, as cited in Katz, 2015). Some children may require more support than others. Interviewers should be more supportive of children who are more reluctant in an interview as it allows the child to become more comfortable (Hershkowitz et al., 2006, as cited in Ahern et al., 2014). When an interviewer is effective in rapport building, a child will be less anxious and distressed, feel more empowered, and be engaged in the interview (Goodman et al., 1991; Hershkowitz et al., 2006; Siegman & Reynolds, 1983, as cited in Katz, 2015). Being supported during the interview is imperative for a child to provide accurate testimony. Providing support all while not being suggestive in nature is very challenging for interviewers (Katz, 2015).

Controversial Forensic Interview Practices

Forensically interviewing young children is controversial. When certain components are included in the interview process, the issue becomes even more controversial. Some of the most widely debated components include the question type, the use of interview aids, and using multiple interviews.

Question Type

The type of questions used in the interview varies on the protocol, the interviewer, and the child being interviewed (London et al., 2008, as cited in Block et al., 2013). The type of question which is used in an interview will change the information that is gathered and the level of detail given. Interviewers look for different levels of detail – some look for as many details as possible, while others stop questioning when there is enough information to make charges. Depending on the goal of the interviewer, some question types will be more helpful than others (McWilliams et al., 2021). A concern when interviewing children is they are suggestible, and they will guess if they do not know the answer. A child's tendency to guess when answering questions depends on the question-type and instructions given. Another concern some interviewers have is that the child will recant previous statements of abuse (Volpini et al., 2016). This is more likely to occur if there are any suggestive influences or if the interviewer repeats the question. When a question is repeated, it sends the message to the child that they must change their answer, as their first answer was wrong or unacceptable.

Magnusson (2020) adapted a chart that displays question types in forensic interviewing (adapted from Lamb et al., 1996, 2018; Melinder et al., 2020). Table 1 displays this adapted chart. This paper will focus primarily on cued recall prompts, directive questions, and closed yes/no questions.

Table 1*Question Types Used in Forensic Interviews*

Question Types	Definition	Example
Invitation	Broad open-ended questions encouraging children to engage in free recall	‘Tell me everything that happened.’ ‘Tell me why you are here.’
Cued recall prompts	Broad open-ended questions encouraging children to elaborate on specific details mentioned by the child	‘You said she touched you, tell me more about that.’
Directive questions	Open-ended questions prompting for specific information (e.g., who, what, where, when, and how)	‘What did the room look like?’ ‘Where did that argument happen?’
Facilitators	Brief utterances used to convey active listening and facilitate conversation	‘uh-huh’ ‘mhmm’ ‘okay’
Summaries	Summaries of information the child has recalled previously during the interview	‘You said before that he slapped you when you got home from school.’
Option-posing questions	Close-ended questions with two or more response options	‘Were your clothes on or off?’
Closed yes/no questions	Close-ended questions that can be answered with yes or no	‘Was there anyone else home?’
Suggestive questions	Questions that introduce new information and suggest a specific answer	‘I bet it was scary to come home from school, wasn’t it?’

Cued recall prompts are the most general kind of open-ended questions which are asked in an interview. When a child is asked open-ended questions, the child is able to give any information they remember, whereas with more specific questions, children are being asked to give information which was often not witnessed or poorly remembered (Laimon & Poole, 2008). These open-ended questions, or free-recall prompts, have been found to provide a great number of disclosures from young children. Preschoolers had an 80% initial disclosure rate when free-recall prompts were used (Lamb et al., 2007). This limits the need for multiple interviews. Children as young as 4 years old are able to provide a great amount of important information

about abuse when free-recall prompts are used (Lamb et al., 2003). This finding negates the argument some researchers make, saying that young children are incapable of narrating accurately. When open narrations are used, children are more likely to be believed. When a child is able to give a narrative, adults are more likely to believe the child is telling the truth (Laimon & Poole, 2008). Younger children have been found to provide less details than older children when cued recall prompts are used (Lamb et al., 2003). More details were provided by older children, however the number of responses between older and younger children was not found to be significant between ages.

Another kind of open-ended questions which are used in forensic interviews are directive questions. Directive questions are commonly described as the wh- questions (Lamb & Fauchier, 2001; Peterson et al., 1999, as cited in Malloy et al., 2017). Wh- questions include the questions of why, who, what, and where. How/why questions or prompts are often included with the more directive wh- questions. Research has been completed to explore how children respond to open-ended questions, but not wh- questions (Lamb et al., 2008, 2011, 2015, as cited in Malloy et al., 2017). Wh- questions ask a child for specific details in a category (Peterson et al., 1999, as cited in Malloy et al., 2017). Children begin using wh- words around two to three years old (P.A. deVilliers & deVilliers, 1979, as cited in Malloy et al., 2017). Some wh- questions are easier for preschool-aged children to answer (J.G deVilliers & deVilliers, 1978, as cited in Malloy et al., 2017). This is because children are more commonly asked some wh-questions than others. Children have more difficulty answering how/why questions as they are more abstract in thought. Some argue a child's difficulty understanding how/why questions stems from simply not being asked those questions as much (Rowland et al., 2003, as cited in Malloy et al., 2017). In Malloy and colleagues' (2017) research, it was found forensic interviewers use how/why

questions quite commonly, as they make up 22% of interviewer prompts. Of these prompts, only 8.5% of the questions brought about details from the child. This study shows that interviewers rely on how/why questions, even if the child does not have the ability to answer these types of questions. With the use of how/why questions, preschoolers may not recognize that they do not understand the purpose of the question. The child may also be unable to provide the information which the interviewer is looking for. These kinds of questions can be frustrating and confusing for young children.

Closed yes/no questions are another form of questions used by interviewers. The use of these questions in interviews stir up some controversy – this controversy stems from the disagreement of using cued recall questions with young children. Some practitioners believe open-ended questions usually do not produce valuable information from four- to six-year-olds (Bourg et al., 1999; Hewitt, 1999; Lyon, 1999; Saywitz & Goodman, 1996, as cited in Lamb et al., 2007). This causes many interviewers to simplify the line of questioning when talking to younger children. Some researchers argue a young child being skilled in narrating may cause more inaccurate information than accurate information. Neisser (1988, as cited in Kulkofsky et al., 2007) argue children learn positive reactions come from a good story, which may cause a child to embellish in social situations. Children have less opportunity to embellish their stories when asked yes/no questions. Children are also less likely to guess. Children are less likely to answer with ‘I don’t know’ when asked yes-no questions instead of wh- questions (Geddie et al., 2001; Gee et al., 1999; Waterman et al., 2000, 2001, 2004, as cited in McWilliams et al., 2021). The use of open-ended questions puts the child at risk of not only sharing false information, but also not including information. Using only open-ended questions puts the child at risk of omitting information (Perona et al., 2005). In the research study of Kulkofsky and colleagues

(2007), children provided more information when prompted, rather than when giving spontaneous narratives. However, the spontaneous details were more accurate.

As stated above, the type of questions used causes varying results, making researchers confused as to what line of questioning is best to use with young children. Interviewers often feel the need to use more than open-ended questions with preschoolers as they need more prompting to retrieve details from memory (Hamond & Fivush, 1991; Hershkowitz et al., 2012, as cited in Malloy et al., 2017). Younger children may require more narrowly focused open-ended questions during the narrative portion of the substantive phase (Faller, 2007; Hershkowitz et al., 2012; Lamb et al., 2003; Orbach & Pipe, 2011, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). No matter the question type, interviewers should avoid asking many questions in a row without allowing the child to answer. This will help avoid confusion and stress (Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). Young children are very capable of answering many questions of diverse types (Hershkowitz et al., 2012).

Use of Interview Aids/Drawings

Props can be used for a variety of purposes in an interview. Things like drawings, fidget toys, and puzzles can be used to help a child feel more comfortable in the interview setting (Poole, 2016, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). Other tools can be used for the purpose of assessment. Dolls and drawings can be used to help a child communicate non-verbally.

Anatomical dolls or body diagrams can be utilized to clarify something which the child shared in their disclosure. The use of anatomical dolls or other media can spark recollection of other body-related experiences if used correctly (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). The use of anatomical dolls and body diagrams began to become popular in the forensic interview setting in the 1970s (Poole & Bruck, 2012, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). Children that lack verbal or

cognitive skills had another route of communication (Hlavka et al., 2010). This was especially helpful for the children who were anxious or embarrassed. Many professionals question whether the use of interview aids or media are helpful to the investigation or hinder it (OJJDP et al., 2015). Depending on the forensic interview model being used, the introduction of the media varies – some professionals advise the use during the rapport building phase to introduce body parts and some recommend waiting until after the child has disclosed the abuse (McCoy & Keen, 2014, as cited in Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). Props may be distracting for the child as it shifts from the purpose of the interview (Goodman & Melinder, 2007, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). When an anatomical doll or body diagram is used, the number of details given by children increases, but the accuracy of the report decreases (Poole & Bruck, 2012, as cited in Magnusson, 2020).

The most common method which allows children to independently share their thoughts are though using photos and drawings (Ailwood, 2011; Groundwater-Smith et al., 2015; Sahimi & Said, 2011, as cited in Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). The use of photos and drawings are not to gather a description based on the content, but rather to open up a conversation (Flee & Li, 2016, as cited in Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). Drawing can decrease the social demands of the interview, assist in memory retrieval, and help the child feel more comfortable reporting abuse (Brown et al., 2007). Drawing encourages children to retrieve memory cues, helps the child talk for a longer period of time, and provides an outlet for sharing details which may be missed in verbal communication (Butler et al., 1995; MacLeod et al., 2013, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). Photos and drawings allow the children to create a narrative and allow the interviewer to interpret the content (Einarsdottir, 2007, as cited in Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). The most researched forensic interview tool is drawing, specifically the ‘draw-and-talk’

technique (Butler et al., 1995, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). The draw-and-talk technique allows the child to draw while sharing their personal experiences. This technique has provided improved productivity and does not decrease a child's accuracy (Butler et al., 1995; Driessnack, 2005, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). Little to no studies have looked at the effect of 'draw-and-talk' on young children (Magnusson, 2020).

Despite the research which finds drawing to be a helpful tool, there is research which finds the opposite. Some have found when a child is allowed to draw during an interview, the accuracy of the details reported decreases (Salmon & Pipe, 2000, as cited in Brown et al., 2007). It is argued drawing creates a space of creativity, putting the child at risk of reporting events that had not occurred (Bruck et al., 2000; Gross et al., 2006; Strange et al., 2003, as cited in Brown et al., 2007). Research suggests when drawing is paired with other aspects of interviewing, the accuracy varies. In one study, drawings which were paired with open ended questions did not impact the accuracy of the child's testimony, whereas those paired with instructions had an increased amount of falsely reported touches (Ceci & Bruck, 1993, as cited in Brown et al., 2007). The accuracy of the information is not the only thing in question. Brown and colleagues (2007) found the use of drawings was not successful in increasing the amount of information provided. This study found that with drawings, some children reported touches inaccurately.

Body diagrams are another tool which can be used to discuss touching and abuse (Magnusson, 2020). Body diagrams can be used to prompt disclosure – interviewers may use body diagrams to name body parts and ask questions in regards to if anyone has touched the specific parts (Poole et al., 2011). More often, body diagrams are used after a child has disclosed touching. This is to make sure the interviewer understands the body parts which the child is talking about. Little to no research exists that is in favor of using body diagrams. Body diagrams

were implemented into forensic interviews without any empirical research. Body diagrams have been found to increase false reports of touching, veer the child off course and encourage children discuss other body parts that have been touched (e.g. “Mommy holds my hand”) (Poole & Dickinson, 2010, as cited in Poole et al., 2011). Much of the issue with body diagrams is how the interviewers use the diagrams. Interviewers use more specific lines of questioning when using body diagrams, which is not recommended by forensic protocols (Aldridge et al., 2004; Malloy et al., 2010, as cited in Poole et al., 2011). Research has failed to prove that the use of diagrams elicits more true disclosures than without using a diagram (Brown et al., 2009; Bruck, 2009, as cited in Poole et al., 2011).

The research of using anatomical dolls are mixed. The use of anatomical dolls in forensic interviews was implemented from clinical practice without knowing if the dolls were helping or hindering the interview (Poole et al., 2011). Numerous studies have used anatomical dolls with other interview aids, props, and /or leading questions, which is where much of the hesitance of using anatomical dolls stems from (Hlavka et al., 2010). Interviewers provide anatomical dolls to preschoolers to help with internal consistency, as young children often use different words for body parts and sexual activity. In a study examining 500 forensic interviews, the use of anatomical dolls as a demonstration aide allowed for enhanced communication between the interviewer and the child. Using anatomical dolls also have been found to produce and increase accurate reports of abuse (Saywitz et al., 1991, as cited in Poole et al., 2011).

Not all researchers agree about the accuracy of testimonies gathered with the assistance of anatomical dolls. The use of dolls, even when anatomically correct, increased fantastical thoughts and false reports of genital and anal touching (Bruck et al., 2000; Thierry et al., 2005, as cited in Poole et al., 2011). When children use anatomical dolls in a fantastical way, it may be

interpreted by the interviewer incorrectly (Ceci & Bruck, 1995, as cited in Brown et al., 2007). In a 1996 study (Steward et al., as cited in Brown et al., 2007), children three to six years old were asked to use an anatomical doll to identify touches which occurred during a pediatric examination. The study found the children's reports were accurate but incomplete – they failed to report some touches and increased their report of touches which had not occurred.

For dolls to be used effectively, children must be able to understand what the doll represents, be able to use the doll in the present as a display of past events, and to not drift off into play (DeLoache, 2000, as cited in Poole et al., 2011). Anatomical dolls allow for a child to distance themselves from their own body, making it easier for children to disclose abuse details (CornerHouse, 2003, as cited in Hlavka et al., 2010). Interviewers find anatomical dolls are helpful when working with young children, but not as effective as when used with older children (Hlavka et al., 2010). Some argue dolls can be used starting at three years old, however based on DeLoache's study (2000, as cited in Poole et al., 2011), 3-year-old children were only accurate 75-90% of the time when using the doll as a representation of self, which is too high of an error result.

Use of Multiple Interviews

Most of the forensic interviewing community agrees children should only endure one interview in order to reduce trauma (McElvaney, 2013, as cited in OJJDP et al., 2015). Many argue if multiple interviews are used, the child will be harmed, no new information will be gathered, the child will be at a higher risk of suggestion, or the interview will overall be at risk. The use of multiple interviews can be important to gather new information, which was not discovered in the first interview. It is very uncommon for an abused child to share all details or information pertaining to abuse at one time. Some children may need more than one interview

(Newlin, 2015, as cited in Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017). In a study conducted by Hershkowitz and Turner (2007), it was found when an interview was repeated, only 37% of the information provided was repeated. Having the opportunity for additional interviews is especially important, as many children will deny abuse in the first interview (Lyon, 2007, as cited in Block et al., 2013). For most children, one interview is enough (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2017; La Rooy et al., 2009, as cited in Coulborn Faller, 2020). But for children who require more than one interview, a greater care should be taken to ensure the child's testimony does not become influenced by outside influence. When multiple interviews are needed, the same interviewer should do both interviews. This limits the amount of people the child has to interact with and lessens the possibility of additional influence or suggestion. Using multiple interviews should not be seen as risky or detrimental, rather as another opportunity for a child to share their experiences (Faller et al., 2010, as cited in Coulborn Faller, 2020). In any case, it is important that interviews occur with as little time as possible between the abuse and the interview (Kulkofsky et al., 2007). Children lose details and information over time, making it important that the forensic interview is done as close to the event as possible.

Program Evaluation: Forensic Interview Protocols

Forensic interviews follow protocols to aid in consistency. Many forensic interview protocols are used in the United States. Most programs utilize the same body of research and professional guidelines to create their protocols (Stauffer, 2020). Many of these nationally recognized protocols are similar but do have some differences (OJJDP et al., 2015). These differences vary based on how forensic interviewing has changed over the years. The use of protocols in forensic interviewing has come a long way. In the 1980s, there was little guidance regarding how an interviewer was to navigate the investigation, often forcing the interviewer to

rely on their instincts as investigators and clinicians (Conte et al., n.d., as cited in Coulborn Faller, 2020). When relying on their own instincts, no two interviews were the same (OJJDP et al., 2015). Despite the two decades of work improving the forensic interviewing process, professionals continue to struggle with the standardization of the process. Some forensic interview protocols are more developed, standardized, and widely used than others – these include the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), CornerHouse, and the National Children’s Advocacy Center (NCAC).

NICHD Protocol

The NICHD created a protocol which was designed to turn the professional recommendations into operational guidelines (Orbach et al., 2000, as cited in Lamb et al., 2007). This protocol was created by Michael Lamb and Kathleen Sternberg (Coulborn Faller, 2020). It has been revised a few times, with the current protocol containing eleven scripted phases. When the NICHD protocol was revised, interviewers were then able to interview children who are suspected to be abused, not just those who have reported abuse (Lamb et al., 2007; Pipe et al., 2007, as cited in Coulborn Faller, 2020). With the revision of the NICHD protocol, child disclosures increased by approximately 10% (Hershkowitz et al., 2014, as cited in Coulborn Faller, 2020). The NICHD continues to be scripted and now allows for rapport building to be implemented before interview rules are given to the child (Hershkowitz et al., 2014, as cited in Coulborn Faller, 2020). The NICHD protocol is used globally – it has been translated into 24 languages (Coulborn Faller, 2020). Only 7% of all child advocacy centers in the United States are trained in the NICHD protocol (National Children’s Advocacy Center, 2011a, as cited in Anderson et al., 2014).

The NICHD protocol consists of the introductory phase, rapport-building phase, traditional phase, and then the directive phase (Lamb et al., 2007). In the introductory phase it is the interviewer's job to introduce themselves, explain the purpose of the conversation, and explain the ground rules. The NICHD protocol asks children to say "I don't know" if they are unsure of the answer to a question and encourage the child to tell the truth. During the rapport building phase, the goal is to get the child used to open-ended questions and where the interviewer asks a child to explain a neutral task in detail. During the transition phase, the interviewer begins by asking some more open-ended general questions, all while becoming more specific if the child fails to identify the target events. If a child makes an allegation, the interviewer tries to get as much information about the event through the use of an invitation to share all details. Non-suggestive, open-ended questions are used (*NICHD investigative interview protocol*, n.d). More focused questions can be used if the child struggles to disclose abuse with open-ended prompts. If more details are needed, option-posing questions can be used. The NICHD encourages the interviewer to smile, lean forward, make eye contact, acknowledge the child's emotions, and provide non-contingent support to the child (Hershkowitz et al., 2014, as cited in Coulborn Faller, 2020).

The NICHD protocol is arguably the most widely researched forensic interviewing protocol and has been found to have mixed results. When an interviewer uses the NICHD protocol, the quality of information gathered by the alleged victims is of higher quality (Lamb et al., 2007). Those who use the NICHD protocol use open-ended questions and half as many option-posing questions/suggestive prompts compared to other protocols. One flaw is when the NICHD protocol is used, 1/3rd of children fail to disclose abuse (Hershkowitz et al., 2005, as cited in Azzopardi et al., 2014). Another potential flaw of the NICHD protocol is it may be

biased. This protocol was developed by its own researchers and did not undergo any critical analysis (Brackmann, 2013, as cited in Robbins, 2018). With the NICHD being the most common scripted interview protocol, it is unsure if it causes more harm than good.

CornerHouse

CornerHouse developed the first protocol in 1989, named the RATAAC (Coulborn Faller, 2020; Stauffer, 2020). RATAAC stands for rapport, anatomy identification, touch inquiry, abuse scenario, and closure (Coulborn Faller, 2020). RATAAC is a semi-structured protocol, meaning the interviewer is able to accommodate any needs a child may have (Anderson et al., 2010, as cited in Coulborn Faller, 2020). In the RATAAC, media is used including anatomical dolls, easel drawing, aids, and anatomical drawings (Anderson et al., 2010, as cited in Coulborn Faller, 2020). After being revised, the RATAAC became the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol, and continues to use this name (Anderson et al., 2016).

This protocol was created in a way which allows it to be used to report information for any alleged experience – abuse, witnessing a violent crime, exploitation, etc. (Stauffer, 2020). Since 2012, the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol has been used to conduct forensic interviews as well as to train new professionals. In the United States, 52% of child advocacy centers use the CornerHouse protocol. CornerHouse has trained staff in 20 countries and all 50 states of the United States (CornerHouse, 2018, as cited in Coulborn Faller, 2020). CornerHouse (2013, as cited in Anderson et al., 2016) uses a child-centered principle which believes children are the experts of their own experiences. CornerHouse prides themselves on being intentionally flexible with the protocol techniques to tailor the interview to the individual (Stauffer, 2020). The CornerHouse protocol follows three guiding principles. This protocol is “person-centered, semi structured, and forensically sound” (Anderson et al., 2016). A semi structured interview

means similar topics are covered in each interview. The way in which the interview approaches the topics in the interview can vary. This allows for the interviewers to be responsive and sensitive to the child's needs.

There are four stages of the new protocol, which can be modified or removed depending on the needs of the individual being interviewed (Stauffer, 2020). These components include building rapport, seeking information, exploring statements, and ending respectfully. When building rapport, the purpose is to orient the individual to the process, allow the interviewer to better understand the individual's needs and functioning, and facilitate the individual's best functioning. Some methods which can be used in this stage include the use of orienting messages, face drawing, narrative practice, and gathering family information. A couple orienting messages used in the CornerHouse protocol include introducing the individual to the role of the interviewer and telling the individual that they are an expert in their experiences. The CornerHouse protocol does not lay out ground rules or instructions, as to avoid limiting the child's responses, and to give the child more autonomy (Cordón et al., 2005; Mulder & Vrij, 1996; Waterman & Blades, 2011, as cited Anderson et al., 2016). This also avoids suggestive or leading techniques which have been used by interviewers. This allows for a child's narrative to be more credible.

Following building rapport, the interviewer seeks information. During this stage, the interviewer chooses a strategy for talking about the topic of inquiry (Stauffer, 2020). This is done using indirect prompts. The interviewer can intentionally utilize tools if appropriate. Some methods which are used in this stage are open opportunity, anatomy identification, and inquiry (touch, extended touch, general, and specific). Open opportunity is when the interviewer asks the individual to talk about the topic of concern. These phrases can look like 'tell me what you came

to talk to me about today' or 'what did you come to talk about'. If the individual struggles to begin the discussion, the other methods listed above may be implemented. As soon as a statement is made, where the conversation can transition to the third stage, the interviewer should begin the transition.

During the next stage the interviewer and individual explore any statements previously made in the interview (Stauffer, 2020). This is where the bulk of the conversation will take place, allowing the individual to share their experiences. The main way the information is gathered is through the invitation and inquiry approach. This approach uses a traffic light graphic to denote what types of questions are to be used. The green questions are open and focused invitations, as well as facilitators. Yellow questions are the inquiries. This includes wh- questions, clarifying yes/no questions, yes/no questions, and multiple options. The yellow questions should be used with caution, and in the most open way possible. Leading and suggestive questions are red and should never be used. If needed, the interviewer can return to the seek information phase if the individual becomes confused, distressed, or unwilling to share information.

The last stage is meant to transition to the end of the conversation (Stauffer, 2020). The interviewer during this phase attends to any needs the individual may have. This can look like exploring resources, thanking the individual for their participation, answering any questions, and offering business cards.

In general, CornerHouse supports the use of media as long as it is used intentionally (Stauffer, 2020). When used intentionally, media has many benefits: it provides the individual the ability to share details of their experiences, it can be used as a visual reference, it allows the child an option to use instead of their own body, it can be used for clarification and correction, and can be used well as a nonverbal communication option. The usual types of media used are

paper, anatomical diagrams, and anatomical dolls. The developmental ability of the individual using them is important and should not be implemented if developmentally inept to use the tools. Multiple interviews are allowed in the CornerHouse protocol. The use of multiple interviews should only occur if necessary. Typically, multiple interviews will be used with very young children or individuals with special needs. Repeated and duplicative interviews is not best practice according to CornerHouse.

National Children's Advocacy Center (NCAC)

The NCAC model follows a semi-structured format which is meant to be used with children and adolescents (National Children's Advocacy Center [NCAC], 2019). This format can be adapted for various ages and cultural backgrounds.

The interview begins with building rapport (NCAC, 2019). This is done through the interviewer explaining their role, the child's role, and explain how the interview is being documented. This should all be done in a developmentally appropriate way. To help with building rapport, the interviewer brings up a neutral topic and engages the child in conversation. During this conversation, the interviewer is gathering information about the developmental abilities of the child and their comfort level in the environment. The interview instructions are discussed either immediately or following a period of engagement in the conversation. The NCAC (2014, as cited in Anderson et al., 2016) gives the following instructions: to correct me if I say something wrong, that is okay to say 'I do not know' or 'I do not understand, as well as the importance of saying the truth. These instructions do not work well with very young children and practice should be included before implementation. For younger children, the interviewer may practice the rules with the child. Some possible rules which may be discussed are the importance

of telling the truth, the child being the expert of their experiences, and that it is okay for the child to say, 'I don't know' or 'I don't understand.'

Narrative practice then occurs (NCAC, 2019). With the NCAC model, the child's family is briefly talked about. This helps the interviewer understand who frequents the house. The next phase is the allegation phase. In this phase, the interviewer uses open invitations to give the child space to share any abuse allegations. More focused prompts can be used if the child does not initially disclose abuse. If the child still does not share any reliable information, an indirect approach is used. This approach allows the interviewer to engage the child in conversation about experiences without any abuse assumptions. For young children, more direct prompts may be needed. During this phase, wh- questions can be used to get specific information. These types of questions should be used sparingly. Questions which pose options should be used as a last resort. If a child is reluctant, a wider range of questions can be used, as well as the use of media. Last, is the closure phase where neutral topics are introduced, and the interviewer brings the conversation to a close. Referrals may be made based on the needs of the child, as well as answering any questions the child may have.

The NCAC believes in using various methods of questioning in a forensic interview (NCAC, 2019). The use of narrative invitations and open-ended questions is recommended. If clarification or more detail is needed, the interviewer can use focused narrative requests. This type of questioning is best paired with repeating what the child previously shared. Wh- questions should be used only when narrative-based questions are no longer being answered. Yes/no questions can be used and are best followed by an invitation to elaborate.

The NCAC does not have any guidelines as to if media is used during the interview (NCAC, 2019). One interview is recommended for most children. A multiple session interview,

conducted by a single interviewer, can be used if the child is reluctant, severely traumatized, or one who has communicative or intellectual disabilities.

Theoretical Framework

Forensic interviews are utilized due to the information found in theories. These theories impact what is known about child development, the influence of family, etc.

Theory of Cognitive Development

The theory of cognitive development was developed in the 1900s by Jean Piaget (Johnson, 2014). This theory discusses how a child's brain develops throughout their life. The brain naturally develops through four stages: the sensorimotor stage, the preoperational stage, the concrete operational stage, and the formal operational stage.

The sensorimotor stage occurs from birth to two years old (Johnson, 2014). During this stage the child reaches many important developmental milestones. The first milestone is object permanence, which is when children understand that although they may not be able to see something, it still exists. Children are developing the ability to form mental representations – representational thinking. As children can move around more, their worldview expands. This allows a child to be able to seek out hidden objects which have representations in their memory. A child in the sensorimotor stage is now able to complete goal-directed actions.

The preoperational stage occurs from ages two to seven, which is considered the age of young children in a forensic interview lens (Johnson, 2014). During this stage, a child's vocabulary is expanding rapidly and children are learning about language. Children cannot manipulate information mentally and are unable to understand logical relationships (Hwang & Nilsson, 2011, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). During the preoperational stage, children learn

centralization (focusing on one thing at a time), egocentrism (focus on self and difficulty understanding other perspectives), lack of conservation (difficulty understanding that characteristics are the same when the physical appearance changes), and non-reversibility (difficulty understanding that things cannot be reversed). Egocentrism is acquired at this stage, meaning children have difficulty understanding other points of view (Johnson, 2014).

From the ages of seven to eleven, children progress through the concrete operational stage, which is where a child is able to think logically (Johnson, 2014). Children are beginning to understand if/then thinking. Children are unable to think abstractly at this point. The formal operational stage is from the age of eleven and on. Abstract thinking is able to occur. Children are capable of using more advanced deductive and inductive thinking, as well as if/then thinking.

When a child is developing, their abilities are constantly changing. Forensic interviews require the process and interviewer to be developmentally aware. This developmental awareness understands that children will understand concepts and answer questions differently. By understanding how a child develops in early childhood, the interviewing process can be tailored to the child. This gives the child the best chance at being successful in sharing their experiences.

Attachment Theory

In forensic interviews, the attachment theory is vital to how the child develops, their social interactions, and can shape how/if a child discloses abuse. The attachment theory was founded in the 1930s and 1940s by John Bowlby (Scharfe, 2017). Bowlby observed the effects of maternal separations early in life. According to Bowlby, attachments, while formed in infancy, impact all relationships throughout life. Infants form a primary attachment with their main caregiver. These

primary attachments can occur throughout life. Attachments are stable, although can change when introduced to a traumatic event.

When a child is separated from a caregiver for longer amounts of time, they will go through a pattern of behaviors – distress, despair, and detachment (Bowlby 1973/1991, as cited in Scharfe, 2017). These behaviors ensure survival of the child. First, the child will go into distress to attract the attention of a caregiver. A caring individual will respond to the child's distress and comfort them. The children who are not cared for will learn care is given to them inconsistently. When care is not given, a child may go on to believe they are not worthy of love, care, and affection. After distress, a child goes into the stage of despair. It is in this stage an infant would stop searching for care, which would alert any predators nearby. Lastly, if a child is still not reunited with a caregiver, a child will become detached from that caregiver. This can allow for a new caregiver to become attached to the infant. Children who are insecure in their attachment to their caregivers may struggle with coping when separated.

Ainsworth continued the work of Bowlby and argued the reunion and the separation are important when trying to understand attachment stress (Ainsworth et al., 1978, as cited in Scharfe, 2017). Ainsworth is most known for her infant attachment categories. These categories include secure, avoidant, and resistant. In later years, Main created the fourth category, disorganized. Children who are secure in their attachment trust the ability of their caregivers to respond to their needs. These infants wish to be close to their caregivers and then are able to play independently. Avoidant children believe their caregivers are incapable of comforting them. These children struggle to regulate their negative emotions. Resistant children learn a caregiver's care is unpredictable, seeking comfort inconsistently (clingy and withdrawn intermittently). These children are difficult to console and do not return to play. Lastly, disorganized children are

often abused. These children do not seek or avoid attention but freeze in response to extreme stress.

Children who are not secure develop insecure attachments as they experience events of inconsistent or non-existent care (Ainsworth et al., 1978, as cited in Scharfe, 2017). These insecure attachments negatively impact child development. These children may become less socially capable, have emotional and behavioral issues, have medical complications, and score lower on tests.

A child's attachment is important in forensic interviews. How a child attaches may affect their memory capabilities of encoding, storing, and retrieving autobiographical memories (Chae et al., 2011, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). The memories of a child are important to the accuracy of their testimony in an interview. Chae et al. (2018, as cited in Magnusson, 2020) found preschoolers with a more secure attachment report more correct information than children with an insecure attachment style when interviewed about a distressing event. A child's early attachment influences their social interactions and behaviors throughout their life (Hwang & Nilsson, 2011, as cited in Magnusson, 2020). This can also impact if a child discloses the abuse and how a child interacts with the interviewer. Depending on the attachment of a child, they are predisposed to struggle in life, even in the disclosing and sharing of abuse they have endured.

Recommendations: Ideal Components of an Interview

Each child, as they develop, develop at their own rate. This creates differences in each child. These differences require an interview structure that is flexible to the needs of each child. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility, all while following the latest evidence-based research.

The type of questions used in an interview are crucial in determining the information a child shares. The questions can determine if false information is given due to coercion, a child guessing, or a child creating a 'good story.' Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al. (2019) found when interviewing young children, those who used encouragement, open-ended-questions, and question requests found a greater number of responses, interaction, and explanation from the children than close-ended questions and utterances. Open-ended questions/free-recall prompts should be used first and make up the majority of the question type. Lamb and colleagues (2003) have found young children are able to provide a substantial amount of information when this type of questioning is used, which cannot be said for cued recall prompts. Wh- questions should be used if more detail is needed and the child seems to understand the wh- questions being asked. Cued recall questions should be cautiously used and only for clarifying something a child has already disclosed during the interview.

Interview aids and media like drawing, anatomical dolls, and body diagrams can be helpful for children to share information in a non-verbal way. The interviewer can use free drawing to help build rapport with a child and allow the child to feel comfortable in the interviewing space. By the time a child is four years old, a child can use an object to represent themselves (DeLoache & Marzolf, 1995; Hewitt, 1999, as cited in Hlavka et al., 2010). Media should not be used if the child seems to get distracted by the media. Interview aids have mixed evidence showing their best use in an interview. Due to a mix of research, interview aids should be used if a child becomes non-verbal during the interview, but is willing to write, draw, or point to things. Interview aids can also be used if a child has made a disclosure but needs the media to provide greater details. For example, if a child states their abuser touched them in their 'special part,' an interviewer can use a body diagram or doll and ask the child to point to where their

special part is. This use of media can provide the child the option to use a representational object rather than themselves, limiting added stress or trauma.

Lastly, the use of multiple interviews should not be a taboo topic. Most children can provide all needed information in one interview. However, multiple interviews can be used for the children who may need more time to get comfortable with the space, interviewer, or topics being discussed. This is especially true for young children. It is also possible the child is struggling to share all of the information due to an extensive history of abuse. Multiple interviews can be used to gather additional information, which was not talked about in the first interview, as it is uncommon for a child to give all of the information in one interview.

Overall, the interview process should be flexible and reflect the needs of the child. Each child is different, and their numerical age may not match their developmental age. The interviewer's job is to provide a safe and supportive environment for the child to express intimate and terrifying details of their experiences.

Conclusion

Forensically interviewing children is challenging for many reasons. Because of the challenges which come with interviewing young children, many interviewers do not interview this especially vulnerable population. Through an extensive literature review, the complexities of interviewing children have been addressed.

Child abuse affects thousands of children each year, many of which do not report the abuse until years later. This disclosure can be challenging, as young children may not fully understand what has happened to them, they are often the only victim, and some adults in a child's life may discourage the disclosure of abuse. These obstacles create an environment which

makes an underreported crime reported even less. If no report is made, the victims of abuse are unable to get help. Forensic interviews are one way in which a child can receive help. Forensic interviews are a tool which children can use to safely disclose abuse, in hopes of limiting re-traumatization. This verbal testament can be used in court, so the child does not have to constantly repeat their experiences to strangers. Forensic interviews vary in structure, but typically have three components: the rapport-building phase, substantive phase, and closure phase. Throughout these phases, an interviewer helps a child become comfortable sharing difficult details, provides guidelines which should be followed during the interview, collects a child's testimony, and prepares the child to end the conversation. These phases should be done with a great deal of support and no suggestions from the interviewer.

These forensic interviewers face many challenges due to the developmental differences between children. The memory and linguistic capabilities of children are drastically changing in their first few years. Both are crucial in gathering accurate and understandable information in regards to a child's experiences. Some argue young children are not reliable witnesses due to their high suggestibility. Others even argue young children struggle with being truthful about their experiences. There are many controversial practices which occur in an interview. The types of questions which are asked can alter the information given by the child. The use of interview aids can create an environment which is distracting, soothing, or even coercive. And some children may require more than one interview, which can be helpful or harmful depending on the child.

There are many forensic interview protocols which are utilized in the field. These interviews vary in structure and components they recommend for various age groups. Some common protocols are the NICHD, CornerHouse, and the NCAC. The theory of cognitive

development explains the developmental differences between children. The attachment theory discusses how a child's attachment impacts their development and the implications for forensic interviews.

Based on research, there are recommendations for best practices when interviewing children who are three years old to seven years old. Open-ended questions are the best type of question to be used with young children as it provides the most accurate information, all while limiting any outside suggestion. Media can be used after a child has made an abuse disclosure, but only if the child needs the media to provide additional details. Multiple interviews should be an option for children who are unable to share all of the needed information in the first interview. Most young children may only need one interview but having the option can take the pressure off the child to be vulnerable with a stranger.

Limitations

There are some limitations to the research examined for this paper. One of the greater limitations is the mixed research. Due to the controversial nature of the subjects, there are evidence-based research which supports both sides. With this being the case, it is challenging to provide a clear-cut direction for forensic interviewers. There is also very little research on the effects of forensic interviews on children who are younger than five. In regard to the forensic interview protocols, there is little research done by outside organizations that discusses the effectiveness of each protocol. There is also very little input from interviewers themselves regarding the challenges they face daily when interviewing young children. The research done in the field is typically not done in a natural setting, which may provide skewed results.

Future Research

Based on the contradictory research, it could be recommended that in general, more research needs to be done in this field. Young children are not often used as the subject of forensic interviewing studies. Because of the importance of this age group, it may be beneficial to do further research as to how young children interact in an interview, how they respond to various question types, and how media types influence a child's testimony. There still faces a challenge of finding the best questions and expressions to use in order for young children to share their ideas in the greatest manner (Clark, 2010, as cited in Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2019). Overall, more research needs to occur so interviewers know how to best support and gather accurate information from young children.

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