

Uncorrected proof of:

Powell, M. B., & Brubacher, S. P. (2020). The origin, experimental basis, and application of the Standard Interview Method (SIM): An information-gathering framework. *Australian Psychologist*. Accepted April 18, 2020.

Submitted to *Australian Psychologist*, 6 January 2020

Revision submitted 23 March, 2020

The Origin, Experimental Basis, and Application of the Standard Interview Method (SIM):

An Information-Gathering Framework

Martine B. Powell and Sonja P. Brubacher

Centre for Investigative Interviewing, Griffith Criminology Institute, Griffith University.

Author Note:

Correspondence should be sent to Martine Powell, [martine.powell@griffith.edu.au](mailto:martine.powell@griffith.edu.au)

Centre for Investigative Interviewing, Griffith Criminology Institute, Griffith University, 176  
Messines Ridge Road, Mount Gravatt, QLD, 4122, Australia.

## Abstract

### **Objectives**

The Standard Interview Method (SIM) is a guidance framework for information gathering interviews. This paper describes the purpose, scope, origin, experimental basis, and practical application of the SIM. It provides an informative overview of developments to date for psychologists and researchers within the behavioural sciences, as well as for practitioners who might use the SIM. The SIM contains core evidence-based components but is otherwise open to tailoring and modifications to suit a variety of interviewing purposes such as policing, justice, education, and business. It provides an interview structure and exemplar dialogue, aligned with research into best-practice interview technique.

### **Method**

A detailed overview of the SIM's interview phases, instructions, and exemplar dialogue is provided. The basis for these elements is explained in terms of the experimental and qualitative research that has informed their development.

### **Results**

The SIM provides evidence-based guidance for investigative interviewers, and numerous versions have been created to suit different investigation types, interviewee groups, and jurisdictional or organisational requirements. It is continually refined as new findings from experimental research around best-practice interviewing emerge.

### **Conclusions**

Rather than a single entity or completed product, the SIM represents a dynamic evolution of research, collaboration and testing. Its flexible nature will allow it to keep pace with the ever-progressing knowledge base that informs interview protocol and guidance development, and adapt to local cultures, legislation, processes, and systems of operation.

### **Keywords**

Evidence-based practice, Interview guidelines, Interview protocol, Interview structure, Investigative Interviewing, Practice-based evidence.

### **Key points**

#### **What is already known on this topic**

1. There is clear international consensus (based on decades of field and laboratory memory research) around the way interviewers should elicit statements from witnesses during investigations.
2. This consensus is referred to as ‘best-practice’ investigative interviewing; a range of agreed evidence-based skills supported by instruction guides structured around key interview phases.
3. Numerous interview guides exist. These are similar but include differences arising from variations in jurisdictional requirements, local and organisational needs, interviewee groups and research uptake.

#### **What this paper adds**

1. This is the first paper to outline the Standard Interview Method (SIM). The SIM is an interview guidance framework that has evolved over fifteen years and is being used across Australia and internationally.
2. The SIM is a dynamic framework that applies across a wide range of investigation contexts (e.g. criminal justice, education, medicine, business) and interviewee groups (children and adults).
3. Each variation of the SIM is based on formalised and testable deviations that accommodate the minor differences in wording, behaviour and interview technique particular to each context. It is constantly evolving in response to research, collaboration, and testing.

## The Origin, Experimental Basis, and Application of the Standard Interview Method (SIM):

### An Information-Gathering Framework

Interviews with witnesses form the central plank of many police investigations and criminal trials, particularly when the details contained within these interviews are the main evidence (Fisher, 2010). For example, in sexual assault cases there are usually no other people present and there may be scant medical evidence when reporting is delayed. To ensure fair justice outcomes, witnesses should be given the best opportunity to directly relay their accounts of what they observed or experienced (Clark, 2010). A shift has taken place over the last three decades of research on testimony; from an inherent expectation that particular groups of people (e.g., children) are less reliable witnesses than others, to the recognition that individual differences in memory and language ability are minimised in the hands of good interviewers (e.g., Lamb, Brown, Hershkowitz, Orbach, & Esplin, 2018). Indeed, research in both field and laboratory settings has led to widespread international agreement regarding the way interviewers should be instructed to elicit statements from all witnesses (although outdated practices do still persist in pockets worldwide; e.g., see Walsh, Oxburgh, Redlich, & Myklebust, 2016). This consensus is referred to as ‘best-practice’ investigative interviewing (Lamb et al., 2018; Vrij, Hope, & Fisher 2014). In this article, we define investigative interviewing as any interview where the purpose is to elicit an account of an event or situation in order to facilitate decision-making; thus, it is not limited to criminal investigation.

The present paper provides an overview of the Standard Interview Method (hereby referred to as the SIM), which has evolved over fifteen years under the direction of Powell (first author) with the assistance of research collaborators associated with the Centre for Investigative Interviewing (CII). In advance of describing the SIM, we outline the core features of best-practice interviewing. Next, we discuss how different interview guidance documents adopt these shared features, and how they deviate from one another. We then

provide an explanation of the development, structure, and rationale for the SIM, with attention to the components of each interview phase.

### **Best-Practice Investigative Interviewing**

Good interviewing involves a range of skills: directing the interviewee to the information required, minimising defensiveness and anxiety, overcoming people's natural tendency to suppress information, avoiding the introduction of information that has not yet been established, and encouraging accurate, coherent and elaborate detail (Powell, Fisher, & Wright, 2005). Minimising misunderstanding and potential contamination of the memory process is the key to getting the best evidence. Questions must be non-leading, and as free as possible of coercion and complex language (Powell & Earhart, 2018). Further, questions should be framed to encourage elaboration and allow interviewees to report what happened in their own words and at their own pace; these elements comprise open-ended questions (Powell and Snow, 2007a). In contrast, specific questions are those in which the information sought is dictated (e.g., "Who else was present?") and the response parameters are narrow (e.g., "What colour was the car?") (Davies, Westcott, & Horan, 2000). The beneficial effects of open-ended compared to specific questions are robust and generalisable across a variety of interviewees, including children (Berg, Munthe-Kaas, Baiju, Muller, & Brurberg, 2019; Brown & Lamb, 2015), adults (Vrij et al., 2014), and people with limited expressive language (Bearman, Brubacher, Timms, & Powell, 2019) and intellectual disabilities (Cederborg & Lamb, 2008).

To be effective, open-ended questions must be implemented within an overall interview format and structure that promotes the interviewee as a valued informant. A structure or protocol can keep interviewers focused on desirable questions and evidential details and ensure that questions are embedded within a framework that maximises trust and understanding. Adhering to a structure results in more standardised service delivery and

reduces the influence of interviewer biases or prior beliefs, especially when it provides key phrases, common question stems, and sequences of questions to use at various stages through the interview (La Rooy, Brown, & Lamb, 2013).

The use of an interview structure, however, does not imply that interviewers will conduct an interview in a desirable manner. Best-practice interviewing needs to be learned because open-ended questions are not frequently used in everyday conversations (Powell et al., 2005). Ideally, the learning process must incorporate regular, spaced practice of skills alongside expert feedback and models of best practice (Powell, 2008). Case profiles and witnesses' language and cognitive abilities differ, and thus investigative interviewers must be able to demonstrate autonomy, judgment, flexibility and responsibility when applying best-practice guidelines in varied and unpredictable situations.

### **Interview Guidance Documents**

Numerous distinct guidance documents exist for conducting witness interviews. The majority are focused on interviewing children because that population has been the target of the most research. We speculate that this situation has arisen because children's immature cognitive abilities mean that they require extra considerations when interviewed compared to adults (Lamb et al., 2018; Powell & Snow, 2007a). Nevertheless, contemporary research shows that much of what we have learned about interviewing children and other vulnerable people is relevant to interviewing adult witnesses (Vrij et al., 2014).

Some of the most widely used documents for children include the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) protocol (Lamb et al., 2018), Tom Lyon's ten step version (Lyon, 2005); The step-wise guidelines (Yuille, Cooper, & Hervé, 2009); the National Children's Advocacy Center's Forensic Interview Structure (2019); Guidance for Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) in Criminal Proceedings (Ministry of Justice, 2011); the CornerHouse Forensic Interview Protocol (Anderson et al., 2010), and Developmental

Narrative Elaboration (Saywitz & Camparo, 2014). The cognitive interview was developed mainly for interviewing cooperative adults (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992); however, it does contain some provisions for interviewing children.

The structure and format of the guidance documents, irrespective of witness group, is quite similar. This similarity exists because they represent interpretations of the same body of experimental literature. Best-practice interview guidelines are narrative-based and include several consistent elements: An initial greeting, a rapport-building period (which, in vulnerable witness interviews, includes opportunity for the witness to practice responding to open-ended questions), interview instructions, introducing the topic of concern, eliciting a narrative account of the entire allegation(s), more focused or specific questions regarding critical details not previously provided, and closure of the interview in a way that promotes further communication (La Rooy et al., 2015; Vrij et al., 2014).

Differences in guidelines have also emerged. These variations exist because eyewitness testimony research is a vibrant, well-populated field, and research communities are ever-learning and experimentally testing new ways of maximising the outcomes of interviews. Until recently, studies focused on broad strategies (e.g., ask open-ended questions, build rapport). Contemporary research is beginning to address more fine-tuned questions about the precise wording of various prompts, the applicability of certain interview elements for different witness groups, and the format of preparatory phases. For example, while some child interview guidelines recommend giving witnesses practice in identifying problematic questions, Brubacher, Poole, and Dickinson (2015) noted that the evidence for the best way to deliver these rules remains inconclusive, and the optimal timing for delivery is unknown. All interview guidelines highlight the need to use open-ended questions, but definitions for these questions vary. Finally, some researchers have analysed prosecutors' perceptions, in an attempt to better address the conflicting demands of the investigative and evidential process

when police interviews are played in court as the witness's evidence-in-chief (e.g., Burrows & Powell, 2014a; 2014b).

Variations in the integration or update of new research findings into interview guidelines likely reflect a combination of factors. First, it is an immense challenge to stay abreast of the many new research findings and to interpret what practical implications they have (if at all) for the way witnesses are interviewed. Second, the views of industry partners (i.e., potential consumers of interview guidelines) play an important role in the frequency with which guidelines are updated and disseminated in professional journals. Police executives differ in the importance they place on adopting evidence-based interview methods and whether they are willing to invest in the infrastructure required to upskill staff on new improved interview procedures (Westera, Powell, & Milne, 2017). Third, differences in culture, legislation, and inter-agency agreements also need to be considered. For example, despite widespread evidence that child competency testing is generally unrelated to interview performance, these tests are still included in some interview guides because local legislation or customs require that they be administered (Powell, Garry, & Brewer, 2013).

Anecdotally, the existence of different guidance documents has led to misunderstanding and confusion among interviewers. Interviewers may perceive that different guidance documents represent open dissent or rivalry amongst groups. Instead, it is an inevitable consequence (and positive sign) of scientific progress and the complexity of (and varied players in) the process. Greater dialogue around the reasons behind the research teams' specific interview guidelines will help minimise this confusion and equip interviewers to make their own decisions about what techniques they should use.

### **Development, Structure, and Rationale for the Standard Interview Method**

The SIM shares many similarities with other interview guidance documents for information gathering. It promotes the elicitation of accurate, narrative-based accounts of



events. Interviewers are encouraged to do this in three ways: use non-leading open-ended questions (particularly in the initial interview stages), make transparent what role the interviewee is expected to take at each stage of the interview, and avoid raising information that has not yet been established to be true. The SIM contains the same structural elements as other guides: greeting, establishing rapport, introducing the topic of concern, narrative interviewing, specific questions, and closure. It also contains exemplar dialogue to assist the interviewer in each phase and transition point in the interview. Partially scripted protocols tend to promote better transfer of learning to the field because they minimise opportunities for misinterpretation and bias towards habitual ways of responding and thinking (Snell, 2003).

The evolution, approach, and use of the SIM is distinct from most other investigative interviewer guidance documents for witnesses. Existing guides tend to be written for police or child protection workers, and the same guidance document applies across jurisdictions, albeit with adaptations (La Rooy et al., 2015). The SIM, in contrast, is an interview framework used across a wide range of contexts when the purpose of the conversation is for information gathering (e.g., criminal justice, family law, medicine, business). This reflects the diversity in scope of training offered through the CII, and that interviewing skill applies to many investigation contexts.

Even if the SIM were limited to interviewing children about abuse, however, it would not be a one-size-fits-all guidance document. Minor variations in wording and technique inevitably occur within and across jurisdictions. This is because matters that are the focus of investigative interviews are typically provincial, with each state and individual organisation having its own cultures, legislation, processes, systems of operation, and inter-agency agreements. Further, variations are needed when the protocol is translated to a new language (see for example Navarro, Knight, Sharman, & Powell, 2019). The SIM model formalises the

variations. What the acronym represents is a network of similar documents that share a core framework or approach. Each new variation is created in collaboration with an industry partner and includes context-specific guidance and exemplar text, outlining clearly what the interviewer needs to do. While individual organisations or interviewers may refer to their guide as merely *the SIM*, variants are identified by researchers and trainers using the following labelling system: [Language]-[Interviewee group]-[Investigation type]-[Jurisdiction, organisation, or other context identifier(s)]-[Version number]. For example, the protocol used in a vulnerable witness interview course designed for police and lawyers in Chile is labelled SIM-SP-CHILD WITNESS-SEXUAL-ASSAULT-CHILE-V1. A protocol developed for an Australian Commission that implements a reportable conduct scheme for organisations who work with children is labelled SIM-EN-CHILD WITNESS-ASSAULT-COMMISSION-V1. Labels are used internally within the CII (for tracking and monitoring of interview developments) rather than by industry.

The rationale for the SIM approach is twofold. First, prior interviewer evaluation research shows that a degree of tailoring of interview guidance documents inevitably occurs in the field to address advice and preferences of local stakeholders (e.g., prosecutors, legal advisors, policy makers). When persons with limited expertise of the research literature conduct the tailoring, there is often dilution and tainting of recommended best practice. With the SIM system, the tailoring is formalised and evidence-based (evolving from experimental or quasi-experimental research). Industry partners' involvement in the research also means they are more likely to be influenced by new evidence than by their prior theories and beliefs about what works (Pawson, 2006).

Second, the rigorous labelling system facilitates the ease of experimental testing of the new improved ways of implementing interview elements. Contemporary tracking of techniques ensures appropriate control of variables during data collection. The intense

engagement with industry partners about the preferred operationalisation of different interview strategies helps to generate new research ideas and perspectives. Since the SIM approach commenced, the CII's research has become less discipline-centric (i.e., memory focused), crossing boundaries of law, speech pathology, culture, linguistics, education, criminal justice, and mental health.

### **Research Underlying the Core Phases and Variants of the SIM**

In this section, we review the literature and experimental research that underpinned the development of each core interview phase. Where relevant, we explain the rationale for variations across versions of the SIM.

**Introductory greeting.** A greeting is a communication act that signifies a type of relationship between individuals. In investigative interviews, that relationship is usually one where the interviewer is in a position of authority and will be making recommendations with potentially important consequences. Interviewee anxiety needs to be addressed but without making the process appear frivolous. Most interviewees (including children and suspects) benefit from a relaxed, steady and humane interviewer manner (Vallano & Schreiber Compo, 2015). This reduces anxiety and creates an interpersonal climate where communication (and subsequently rapport) is facilitated (Abbe & Brandon, 2013).

Interviewers can adopt a wide variety of positive, supportive behaviours including: immediacy actions (e.g., forward lean, open posture, eye contact), active listening (e.g., backchannel responses such as “Uh huh”, occasional paraphrases), finding common ground, smiling (when appropriate), and using the interviewee's name (Abbe & Brandon, 2013; Saywitz, Wells, Larson, & Hobbs, 2019; Vallano & Schreiber Compo, 2015). These are beneficial, provided the interviewer does not use them selectively, such as only demonstrating them when the interviewee provides sought-after information. The selective

reinforcement tactic risks heightening errors in various interviewee groups such as children (Bruck, Ceci, Kulkofsky, Klemfuss, & Sweeney, 2008) and suspects (Davis & Leo, 2017).

For all interviewee groups, the SIM recommends that interviewers maintain a kind and professional manner, where attempts to build rapport are genuine and supportive behaviours are maintained throughout the interview. Variations relate to the way the interviewer's job and the purpose of the interview are explained. The guiding principle is that explanations be simple, brief, and concrete in nature, so as to reduce the load on the interviewee's cognitive resources (Sweller, 1988). Job explanations should ideally be restricted to the *behavioural* process associated with the 'here and now'. This is important even when the interviewee is well acquainted with the interviewer, as interviewees may not be aware of the current (quite distinct) interviewer role. Examples of introductory dialogue prepared in collaboration with industry partners, include:

Thanks for coming to see me. One of my jobs at this school is to talk to children about things that may have happened. We're going to have a talk, and when we're finished, I'm going to take you back to the office. Your mom is waiting for you there.

Thanks for coming. I work for the department of health. My job is to prevent new cases of HIV. My department gets information from a variety of sources. We heard you may have placed someone at risk of HIV. My job is to understand the situation and together work out what we may need to do.

There is unanimous consensus among experts that investigative interviews, where possible, should be electronically recorded (Duke, Uhl, Price, & Wood, 2016; Westera, Kebbell, & Milne, 2016). Even under the most optimal laboratory conditions, professionals' contemporaneous written notes of interviews are an inferior method of documenting interviews, due to omission of details and not delineating interviewer questions from interviewee responses (Cauchi, Powell, & Hughes-Scholes, 2010). Interviews that are electronically recorded may need to commence with a few formalities (e.g., date, names of people present, location) to enable the interview to be identified in future. The SIM instructs interviewers to complete this process efficiently. Speaking directly toward the microphone in

a monotone manner (without expecting the interviewee to actively engage) is one way of doing this.

The date is ...and the time is ... We are at the ..... (location). I'm sitting with ..... (interviewee's full name), whose date of birth is on ..... My name is .....

**Conversational rules.** Following the greeting, interviewers explain the conversational rules of the interview (also referred to as ground rules; see Brubacher et al., 2015). These rules are instructions designed to help interviewees understand the interview process and nature of the conversation. The SIM emphasises the importance of delivering conversational rules using brief and simple language. The following is an example:

So, we're going to have a talk. But before we do, I need to tell you a few things.  
You may take a break when you need to.  
You may use any words you want.  
I will write things when you talk. It helps me remember what you say.  
I might ask something you don't understand. Just say "I don't understand"  
I might ask something, and you don't know the answer. Just say "I don't know"  
And I might say things that are wrong. You should tell me, because I don't know what's happened.

Some form of interview instruction can be found in guidance documents (e.g., Brubacher et al., 2015; Fisher & Geiselman, 1992; Snook, Eastwood, Stinson, Tedeschi, & House, 2010). The empirical evidence supports this generalised use of the rules for both adults and children. For example, in a recent study with adult witnesses of a mock crime (sexual assault), we found that conversational rules (similar to those above) improved adults' ability to identify problematic questions compared to adults who did not receive the rules. Further, the overwhelming majority of participants perceived the rules to be helpful and not patronising (Ali, Brubacher, Earhart, Westera, & Powell, 2020).

In relation to child witnesses, practice in applying one or more rules (as opposed to instruction alone) may be needed to make them effective (Brubacher et al., 2015). The form and extent of practice required for specific rules and age groups, however, is unclear. Danby, Brubacher, Sharman, and Powell (2015) found that a simple practice example was sufficient

for 5- to 9-year-olds to understand and use the “don’t know” rule (e.g., “If I asked you, where do *I* live, what would you say?”), but was not enough for the metacognitively more challenging rules of correcting the interviewer and signalling miscomprehension. After weighing up the need to balance valuable interview time with a mixed experimental literature regarding the type and intensity of practice required to make conversational rules effective, we concluded that SIM-Child variations should incorporate practice of just *one* conversational rule. In some versions of the SIM-Child in Australia, that rule is correcting the interviewer (i.e., the interviewer makes an obvious mistake, which the child corrects). Child investigative interviews in Australia are used as evidence-in-chief and the act of the child correcting the interviewer is viewed by some prosecutors as a quasi-test of credibility (Benson & Powell, 2015a). Versions of the SIM used in Canada include practice of the “don’t know” rule, which has been shown in laboratory research to be effective across a wide age range (Danby et al., 2015; Dickinson, Brubacher, & Poole, 2015).

Irrespective of the conversational rule, practice examples need to be developmentally and culturally appropriate so that *all* children can complete them successfully. Some discretion in the choice of practice example is required depending on the individual context. For example, Hamilton and colleagues demonstrated how modifications to the wording of the rules and practice examples with Australian Aboriginal children could influence outcomes (Hamilton, Brubacher, & Powell, 2016a; Hamilton, Powell, & Brubacher, 2016). Anecdotally, some industry partners have had good success using child gender for the correction rule (e.g., “So if I said you’re a boy [girl], what would you say?”). Children as young as two to three years old can differentiate genders and identify their own (Stennes, Burch, Sen, & Bauer, 2005; Thompson, 1975), and the amusement evoked by the suggestion they have a different gender can be a good icebreaker for rapport. Other options (e.g., when the child’s gender may be in question) include corrections about the child’s age, hometown,

or name. To maximise the effectiveness of conversational rule instructions, interviewers are also encouraged to reinforce adherence to the conversational rules *throughout* the interview (e.g., “It’s okay if you don’t know”, “Remember, I wasn’t there when... so I need you tell me everything that happened ...”).

Finally, truth-lie competency questioning and promise to tell the truth is often included at the end of the conversational rules section of the SIM-Child versions. Truth-lie competency testing is an example of an element that aligns with industry expectations but not scientific research. Irrespective of how the child’s understanding of truth and lies is tested, the outcome is not necessarily related to whether or not a child will actually lie in the interview (Talwar & Crossman, 2012). If truth-lie competency questioning is included in variations of the SIM, it is only because local legislation requires. The promise to tell the truth (e.g., “Will you promise to tell the truth [today/in court]?”), in contrast, does seem to increase the likelihood of truth-telling behaviour, at least in laboratory experiments (Talwar & Crossman, 2012). Recent research suggests that the efficacy of this practice may be lessened amongst maltreated children or the very young (Bender, O’Connor, & Evans, 2018; Quas, Stolzenberg, & Lyon, 2018).

**Narrative practice.** Nearly all contemporary child interview guidelines include an episodic memory training phase, otherwise known as narrative practice. This phase is where the child recalls a recent neutral or pleasant event in response to open-ended prompts. It has a broad array of social and cognitive benefits for both children and interviewers (see Roberts, Brubacher, Powell, & Price, 2011, for review). Experimental literature on the effectiveness of narrative practice for *adults* is still in its infancy, so extant versions of the SIM-Adult do not include this phase. As such, this section reviews the experimental evidence for narrative practice with children only.

Narrative practice is the first point in the interview where the control is transferred to the interviewee. This empowerment can motivate children to provide more detail when an event (e.g., episode of sexual abuse) is recalled later in the interview (Roberts et al., 2011). When given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with open-ended (as opposed to closed) questions during the practice phase, children produce longer and more informative responses in their subsequent interview about the target (e.g., abuse) event (Price, Roberts, & Collins, 2013; Roberts, Lamb, & Sternberg, 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997). Relative to other interview protocols, the SIM-Child includes more guidance for interviewers about conducting narrative practice, based on recent research in this area. This guidance focuses on choosing an event, establishing whether it was repeated, and the length of practice.

***Choosing a practice event.*** Narrative practice in the SIM guidance commences with a broad open-ended question inviting the child to nominate a fun, recently experienced event, which the child will subsequently recall in response to open-ended questions.

First, I'd like to get to know you better.

Tell me something fun you've done recently.

*If the child does not respond:* Tell me something you like to do.

Other interview guidelines recommend that interviewers ask children about their last birthday or choose a recent public holiday celebration (e.g., NICHD protocol, Ball, Ball, & La Rooy, 2017; State of Michigan Forensic Interviewing Protocol, State of Michigan Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect and Department of Human Services, 2017). The SIM advises interviewers to let the child choose the event (where possible), in order to ensure that it is culturally appropriate and something the child actually wants to, and is easily able, to talk about.

Variations to the SIM typically relate to how this activity is introduced. Based on research with stakeholders in Australian Aboriginal communities (Hamilton, Powell, & Brubacher, 2016), interviewers are advised to share some information about themselves first



(reciprocity) with children from these communities. Although, Hamilton, Brubacher and Powell (2016b) found that the presence or absence of narrative practice did not predict the accuracy or informativeness of Australian Aboriginal children's accounts, research with this witness group is still in its infancy and has so far focused solely on the impact of their recall of a (pleasant) event that was staged by the researchers. Another example of a variation relates to adolescents' heightened development. Adolescents' increased cognitive capacity and social awareness could make them more likely to question the process (Martin, Bloch, & Volkmar, 2017). More transparency around the value of this task may therefore be needed prior to engagement; this notion is yet to be tested experimentally.

Some people find it helpful to chat about something else before we get started - like something you've done recently or that you like to do. It may give you a chance to settle into the room and get used to how the interview will work. Is there an event you remember well and would like to talk about?"

***Establishing whether event was repeated.*** After confirming the event to be recalled during narrative practice, the SIM directs interviewers to establish whether the nominated event is one that has been experienced once, or repeatedly. Best-practice interviewing guidelines state that the frequency of an event should be determined by asking the question, "Has (event/action as described by the child) happened one time or more than one time?" (Brubacher, Powell, & Roberts, 2014; Lamb et al., 2018). Children's answers to this question allow interviewers to direct their recall to one specific incident (or the only incident), rather than narrate about the event in generic terms (i.e., what typically happens).

While generic information may be useful when discussing substantive issues (see Brubacher, Powell, & Roberts, 2014), it should be avoided during the practice phase (Brubacher, Roberts, & Powell, 2011). Brubacher and colleagues (2011) found that children who practiced reporting generic information persisted in providing generic details when the topic changed, despite interviewer prompts that requested information about a *specific* incident. In contrast, children who practiced describing specific incidents were less likely to

give generic details about a subsequently discussed event (see Whiting & Price, 2017, for a related investigation). Why would this matter? The outcome of investigations about offences often hinges on a person's ability to give details linked to time and place. Indeed, in some jurisdictions, child witnesses are required to describe one or more occurrences of abuse with a reasonable degree of precision in order that appropriate charges be laid (Guadagno, Powell, & Wright, 2006; *S v. R* 1989). Unless children are prompted to recall episodic information (i.e., details about one episode of a repeated event) the practice will not facilitate their recall of episodic information when this is later asked of them in relation to the abusive event (Price et al., 2013).

***Practice Length.*** The SIM-Child provides some parameters for the length of the child's practice narrative, although it is recognised that individual case features will ultimately influence this anchor. Ideally, narrative practice should strike a balance between ensuring that children respond informatively to open-ended prompts about a neutral topic and yet are moved on to the substantive event topic *before* their limited attention spans and cognitive resources are depleted (Davies et al., 2000; Teoh & Lamb, 2010; but see Brown et al., 2013). For example, Davies and colleagues (2000) found that rapport-building sessions that lasted longer than eight minutes resulted in a decrease in children's attention later in the interview. Sessions that were less than eight minutes elicited longer answers from children in the substantive stage of the interview. Similarly, Teoh and Lamb (2010) found a negative correlation between the length of the practice narrative and children's communication when questioned about their alleged abuse. In an experimental investigation, Whiting and Price (2017) found that 6- to 10-year old children provided more accurate recall about a magic show after as little as two minutes of narrative practice (compared to none). Taking this body of research together, the SIM-Child guidance advises that the narrative practice phase lasts for approximately three to five minutes for most children.

**Introducing the topic of concern.** The next stage common to most interview guidelines is the substantive phase, where the topic of concern is established and discussed. In all versions of the SIM, the interviewer is instructed to start with the neutral prompt “Tell me what you have come to talk about” (or if the interviewer has come to see the interviewee “I’ve come here to talk to you. Tell me what we are here to talk about today”). There are several reasons for using this prompt. First, it is non-leading, and in most situations (even with child witnesses) the interviewee will disclose a relevant detail, which can then be used to launch a narrative account (Powell & Snow, 2007b; Sternberg, Lamb, Orbach, Esplin, & Mitchell, 2001). Second, if the interviewee has misconceptions about the purpose, this prompt provides the opportunity for these misconceptions to be identified and corrected. Third, even if the interviewee says, “I don’t know” (which happens in around one-third of child interviews about abuse, Azzopardi, Eirich, Rash, MacDonald, & Madigan, 2018), the prompt is still helpful in reiterating a process where the interviewee is an active informant and the interviewer is naïve about what has occurred (Powell & Snow, 2007b). Although this research has been conducted explicitly with children, the body of suggestibility literature with adults supports the notion that interviewers should minimise introducing information not mentioned by a witness (e.g., Loftus, 2018).

Variations to the wording of the introductory prompt are not recommended in the SIM guidance at this stage because experimental research is starting to highlight how minor changes can affect responses. For example, we recently tested the construction, “Tell me what you have come to talk about” versus, “Tell me why you have come to talk to me” with children. We predicted that the *what* construction would be more effective in eliciting the topic of the interview because children acquire the ability to understand concrete Wh- words (who, where, and what) earlier than the abstract Wh- questions (when, how, and why) (Bloom, Merkin, & Wootten, 1982). The prediction was supported: 5- to 9-year old children

( $n = 401$ ) were more likely to give an informative response immediately to the *what* construction compared to the *why*. This was especially true for the youngest (5- to 6-year old) children (Earhart, Danby, Brubacher, Powell, & Sharman, 2018).

So, what should the interviewer do if the witness, for whatever reason, does not disclose the topic of concern in response to the initial prompt? In answering this question, we have been guided by the perspectives of crown prosecutors, who emphasise the importance of brevity, directness, and clarity while minimising potential contamination (Ali, Westera, Zajac, & Powell, 2019; Burrows & Powell, 2013; 2014a; 2014b; 2015; Guadagno et al., 2006). The SIM guidance recommends that the interviewer introduce a detail known to the interviewer that may trigger the interviewee's memory or establish 'common factual ground' that will then potentially launch narrative detail about the substantive issue. The condition to using this approach is that major issues of contention (e.g., offender, offence committed) are avoided and that any detail raised by the interviewer is followed up with a yes/no question that invites the interviewee to acknowledge whether the detail is true (Powell, 2003; Powell & Snow, 2007b).

Interviewer: I heard that an ambulance visited your home last night. [Introducing prior information]

Interviewer: Did an ambulance visit your home last night? [Establishing whether interviewee acknowledges prior information to be true]

Child: Yes

Interviewer: Tell me what happened. [Using affirmative response to launch a narrative]

The function of the yes/no question (seeking confirmation as to whether the information raised was true) is to lower the risk of eliciting a false account. Questions that *presume* plausible false detail, and simultaneously ask the witness to generate an elaborate response, are the riskiest in creating a false account (Sharman & Powell, 2012). That risk is heightened if the interviewee is able to draw on existing memories to provide a response (Garry & Wade, 2005). To minimise the likelihood of the interviewer accidentally raising issues of contention,

the SIM guidance strongly recommends that any leading questions used in this phase be prepared in advance of the interview.

**Eliciting a narrative.** As discussed earlier, open-ended questions are the most useful type, particularly in the early stages of the investigation process. The SIM guidance defines open-ended questions using relatively narrow parameters: those that encourage elaborate detail, but also do not dictate what information is required (Powell & Snow, 2007a). The added restriction eliminates most “Wh” (e.g., who, why, when, where, how) questions, as well as questions that request descriptive detail (e.g., “What did the man look like?”). The reason for the narrow definition is to encourage (as much as possible) a coherent *story* of the situation or event that initiated the concern<sup>2</sup>. One of the most frequent complaints about investigative interviews is that interviewers become too ‘focused and lost in the minutiae’ without realising that the elements needed to support a decision are mostly contained within the ‘story’, which is impeded by numerous ‘Wh’ questions (Davis, Hoyano, Keenan, Maitland, & Morgan, 1999; Guadagno et al., 2006; Snow & Powell, 2012).

When interviewers have a good grasp of the different types of open-ended questions that best elicit narrative detail, they are more likely to demonstrate effective interviewing (Yii, Powell, & Guadagno, 2014). The questions that best facilitate narrative (story) detail fall into three categories. *Initial* open-ended invitations are prompts that begin a narrative or part thereof (e.g., “Tell me everything that happened, start from the beginning”). Open-ended *breadth* prompts elicit information about the broad overriding acts or activities that occurred (e.g., “What happened next?”, “What else happened?”). Open-ended *depth* prompts elicit more elaborate detail about aspects of the event that has previously been mentioned by the interviewee (e.g., “You said he hurt you at the gym, tell me more about that part” or “What happened when he hurt you in the gym”). The words “what happened”, and minimal encouragers (e.g., “Uh huh”, head nodding, silence), are quite effective in keeping the

interviewee talking and focused on acts and activities. The occasional specific question is permitted in this phase, but multiple specific questions in a row are discouraged, especially with witnesses whose language skills are still developing. Due to the deep level of memory processing involved (Kahneman, 2011), it can be exceptionally difficult to get an interviewee back on track (reporting narrative detail again) once the flow has been interrupted.

Most variations to the SIM guidance relate to the degree to which the interviewee's memory should be exhausted before moving onto specific questions. This depends on the interviewee group and the importance of the interviewee's verbal evidence in making investigative decisions. A doctor may typically only need an overview of the situation that led the patient into the consulting room before asking follow-up questions (Lin et al., 2005). The same applies to many crimes attended to by newly graduated police officers such as burglaries and traffic accidents (Zekiroski, 2019). With vulnerable witness groups such as children and people with communication impairment, the risk of error in response to specific questions is much higher, and therefore narrative detail needs to be relied on more heavily than for other witnesses when verbal evidence is important. A recent experimental study showed that for people with extremely limited expressive language (i.e., less than five-word utterances) open-ended questions are beneficial but they need to be associated with additional scaffolding by way of specific questions interleaved with open-ended ones (Bearman et al., 2019).

The complexity of the event and any legal requirements also need to be considered when tailoring guidance materials. For example, to prosecute a case of child sexual abuse, information about specific episodes is sometimes needed; this is to determine the charges that can be laid against the offender, to give the offender an opportunity to provide an alibi and defend him or herself, and to determine the most appropriate sentence (Powell, Roberts, & Guadagno, 2007). The SIM guidance for police officers who interview children about sexual

abuse, therefore, is quite complex and multi-faceted at the narrative stage. It includes instruction around active listening to anticipate whether the offence is repeated, establishing the frequency of the event, using episodic rather than generic prompts (e.g., “What happened” versus “What happens”) to obtain incident-specific detail, adopting interviewees’ words to create labels for different episodes and to check that the labels are unique, and eliciting narrative accounts of each separate episode. Instruction around these individual skills has been shaped by several decades of experimental research (see Brubacher, Powell, & Roberts, 2014, for review).

**The break and further questioning (if needed).** At the completion of the narrative component, the SIM guidance specifies that the interview be briefly suspended. This is so the interviewer can reflect on the evidence so far and prepare further questions, if required. The break may be brief (e.g., a minute pause in the presence of the interviewee) or it may involve the interviewer leaving the room to consult colleagues. The breaks have the added advantage of allowing interviewees time to reflect as well, which may enhance their future responses (Maroni, 2011; Stahl, 1994).

Now we’re just going to have a quick break. We can stay in this room. I need to check my notes to see whether there’s anything else I need to ask you. Are you happy to wait? Do you need anything?

If the interviewee leaves the interview room, any interaction the interviewee may have with others needs to be carefully monitored to avoid contamination.

The break was introduced to the SIM guidance in an attempt to keep interviews as brief as possible. Excessive questioning has been a consistent concern across a range of interviewer groups including police (Benson & Powell, 2015b; Westera et al., 2017), educators (Brubacher, Powell, Skouteris, & Guadagno, 2014) and lawyers (Powell, Westera, Goodman-Delahunty, & Pichler, 2016). In relation to child interviews about abuse, a positive relationship has been found between the total number of questions asked by the investigative

interviewer and the number of inconsistencies raised during cross-examination (Pichler, Sharman, Powell, Westera, & Goodman-Delahunty, 2019). Fortunately, simple instruction around the level of detail required for successful prosecution of offences has been shown to reduce the length of interviews without reducing the quality of evidence (Benson & Powell, 2015a; Burrows, Powell, & Anglim, 2013). Instruction around further questioning varies depending on the type of interviews being conducted, the level of proof required to make a decision and what other avenues are available for acquiring information (Burrows & Powell, 2014c; Burrows & Powell, 2015; Burrows, Powell, & Benson, 2016).

The questioning in this phase is not aimed at eliciting a narrative account. Rather, the questions aim to clarify details and are therefore more specific (as opposed to open-ended) in nature. As a guide to minimising interviewee error, Powell and Snow (2007a) advised that the questions (where possible) should adhere to the following four criteria that make up the acronym SAFE: Simple language, Absence of specific details (not previously raised) or coercive techniques, Flexibility in allowing the interviewee to choose what information will be reported and encourages an Elaborate response. The guidance also advises that (where possible) closed questions should be paired with open-ended questions (e.g., “Was anyone else present?”, If “yes”, “Tell me more about that”, Lamb, Hershkowitz, Orbach, & Esplin, 2008; Powell & Snow, 2007a; Sternberg, Lamb, Esplin, Orbach, & Hershkowitz, 2002).

**Closure.** The final stage common to all protocols is brief and focused mainly on interviewee wellbeing. The elements include: asking interviewees if they have anything further to report, thanking them for participating, answering their questions about the process (as simply and honestly as possible), addressing issues concerning the interviewees’ safety, letting them know how they can make contact again (should they require) and moving to positive topics (e.g., the narrative practice topic) so that interviewees can more easily transition into the next activity of the day. Although there is no direct research exploring the



effect of various types of closures, we know that when people are made to feel valued in the interview process, this enhances trust, the likelihood of future co-operation, and a positive perception of the system as a whole (Murphy & Barkworth, 2014; Murphy, Mazerolle, & Bennett, 2014).

### **Limitations of the SIM Approach**

The SIM represents a set of related guidance documents that adhere to a common structure, but with adaptations and tailoring to meet specific needs. Each variation is recorded, uniquely identified, and tracked. This system allows for evaluation of each variation, but associated findings cannot be causally determined. Specifically, the variations are inherently confounded with the different contexts in which they are used, making direct comparisons inappropriate. In other words, if one variation of the SIM performs better than another, the reason could be due to the adaptation or to other environmental variables. A second limitation to the SIM approach is related to outcome measures: how does one quantify “better” performance? Arguably the most relevant measures are downstream, such as case outcome (e.g., Pipe, Orbach, Lamb, Abbott, & Stewart, 2013). These measures, however, take a very long time to collect (and in the meantime, research and practical needs evolve). Further, they are also not immune to the challenge of multiple extraneous variables; various case outcomes may be associated with myriad factors other than the interview protocol (Bailey, Powell, & Brubacher, 2017; Christensen, 2016).

Two limitations of the broader research literature on investigative interviewing bear mention: gaps in our knowledge base and factors that hamper progress and uptake of research findings. These limitations are not specific to the SIM. Most contemporary interview guidance documents are based on the best available scientific evidence to date, but this is a moving target with some holes in it. The SIM attempts to minimise this limitation by being flexible and open to tailoring. Assessing uptake of findings is made challenging by structural

impediments such as lack of access to data (field interviews) and case tracking (see Powell & Barnett, 2015).

### **Conclusion**

In the criminal justice field, interviewers frequently comment on the number and variety of interview protocols and guidance documents. Over several decades of experimental research on interviewing best practices, these documents have evolved from their original forms and now evince far more similarities to one another than differences. Interview guidance in other contexts (e.g., medicine, education) has also assimilated lessons from the broad empirical literature on how best to elicit information from respondents about sensitive matters. In a continual cycle, findings from experimental research will shape our knowledge base in this area, leading to further and more precise refinements in interview guidance, and testing of those alterations in the lab and field. The SIM should not be conceptualised as a single entity, or completed product for distribution and use by anonymous end-users. Instead, each variation represents a dynamic evolution of research, collaboration, and testing. There are basic features, which we have reviewed here, but the SIM guidance is intended to be adaptable to meet the goals and needs of industry partners and the ever-shifting landscape of the experimental research literature.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to all the police, prosecutors and practitioners who have provided feedback about variations of the Standard Interview Method. Thanks to Mairi Benson and Kimberlee Burrows for data collection when this work was in its infancy.

---

<sup>1</sup>

Standard interview is a term sometimes used to refer to the poor (closed-style) questioning that is typically administered by the police. Standard in this prior literature means ‘typical’ as opposed to best-practice.

<sup>2</sup> A story framework facilitates comprehension of the listener by including elements such as the setting, the initiating and central actions, motivations and goals, internal responses and consequences in a manner that enables the relationships between events and actors to be clearly labelled (Stein & Glenn, 1979).

### References

- Abbe, A., & Brandon, S. E. (2013). The role of rapport in investigative interviewing: A review. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 10, 237-249. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jip.1386>
- Ali, M. M., Brubacher, S. P., Earhart, B., Powell, M. B., & Westera, N. J. (2020). The utility of ground rule instructions with younger and older adult witnesses. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.3648>
- Ali, M.M., Westera, N.J., Zajac, R., & Powell, M. (2019). Australian stakeholders' views on improving investigative interviews with adult sexual assault complainants. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 26, 724-739. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2019.1618748>
- Anderson, J., Ellefson, J., Lashley, J., Miller, A. L., Olinger, S., Russell, A., Stauffer, J., & Weigman, J. (2010). The CornerHouse forensic interview protocol: RATA<sup>C</sup>. *Thomas M. Cooley Journal of Practical and Clinical Law*, 12, 193-331. Retrieved from [heinonline.org](http://heinonline.org)
- Azzopardi, C., Eirich, R., Rash, C. L., MacDonald, S., & Madigan, S. (2019). A meta-analysis of the prevalence of child sexual abuse disclosure in forensic settings. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 93, 291-304. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2018.11.020>
- Bailey, C., Powell, M., & Brubacher, S. P. (2017). The attrition of indigenous and non-indigenous child sexual abuse cases in two Australian jurisdictions. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 23, 178-190. <https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000119>
- Ball, E., Ball, J., & La Rooy, D. (2017). The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Protocol: Interview guide (InteractiveNICHDProtocol). Retrieved from <http://nichdprotocol.com>

- Bearman M., Brubacher, S. P., Timms, L., & Powell, M. (2019). Trial of three investigative interview techniques with minimally verbal adults reporting about occurrences of a staged repeated event. *Psychology, Public Policy, & Law*, 25, 239-252.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000206>
- Bender, J., O'Connor, A. M., & Evans, A. D. (2018). Mirror, mirror on the wall: Increasing young children's honesty through inducing self-awareness. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 167, 414-422. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2017.12.001>
- Benson, M.S., & Powell, M.B. (2015a). Evaluation of a comprehensive interactive training system for investigative interviewers of children. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 21, 309-322. <https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000052>
- Benson, M., & Powell, M. (2015b). Organisational challenges to delivering child investigative interviewer training via e-learning. *International Journal of Police, Science and Management*, 17, 63-73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461355715580912>
- Berg, R., Munthe-Kaas, H. M., Baiju, N., Muller, A. E., & Brurberg, K. G. (2019). The accuracy of using open-ended questions in structured conversations with children: A systematic review. Report – 2019. (Oslo: Folkehelseinstituttet). Retrieved from <https://www.fhi.no/en/publ/2019/The-accuracy-of-using-open-ended-questions-in-structured-conversations-with-children/>
- Bloom, L., Merkin, S., & Wootten, J. (1982). "Wh-questions": Linguistic factors that contribute to the sequence of acquisition. *Child Development*, 53, 1084-1092.  
Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1129150>
- Brown, D. A., & Lamb, M. E. (2015). Can children be useful witnesses? It depends how they are questioned. *Child Development Perspectives*, 9, 250-255. doi:  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1129150>

- Brown, D. A., Lamb, M. E., Lewis, C., Pipe, M. E., Orbach, Y., & Wolfman, M. (2013). The NICHD investigative interview protocol: An analogue study. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 19, 367-382. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035143>
- Brubacher, S. P., Poole, D. A., & Dickinson, J. J. (2015). The use of ground rules in interviews with children: A synthesis and call for research. *Developmental Review*, 36, 15-33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2015.01.001>
- Brubacher, S. P., Powell, M. B., & Roberts, K. P. (2014). Recommendations for interviewing children about repeated experiences. *Psychology, Public Policy, & Law*, 20, 325-335. <https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000011>
- Brubacher, S. P., Powell, M. B., Skouteris, H. & Guadagno, B. (2014). An investigation of the question-types teachers use to elicit information from children. *Australian Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 31, 125-140. <https://doi.org/10.1017/edp.2014.5>
- Brubacher, S. P., Roberts, K. P., & Powell, M. B. (2011). Effects of practicing episodic versus scripted recall on children's subsequent narratives of a repeated event. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 17, 286-314. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0022793>
- Bruck, M., Ceci, S. J., Kulkofsky, S., Klemfuss, J. Z., & Sweeney, C. D. (2008). Children's testimony. In M. Rutter, D. V. M. Bishop, D. S. Pine, S. Scott, J. Stevenson, E. Taylor, & A. Thapar (Eds.), *Rutter's child and adolescent psychiatry* (5th ed., pp. 81-94). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Burrows, K. S. & Powell, M. B. (2013). A prosecutor's guide to improving child witness interviews about alleged sexual abuse: A view from the Australian context. *Investigative Interviewing: Research and Practice*. 5, 12-22. Retrieved from <https://www.iiirg.org/journal/>

- Burrows, K. S., & Powell, M. B. (2014a). Prosecutors' perceptions on improving child witness interviews about abuse. In R. Bull (Ed.), *Investigative interviewing* (pp. 229-242). New York, NY: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-9642-7\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-9642-7_12)
- Burrows, K. S., & Powell, M. (2014b). Prosecutors' recommendations for improving child witness statements about sexual abuse. *Policing and Society*, 24, 189-207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2013.784305>
- Burrows, K., & Powell, M. (2014c). Prosecutors' perspectives on clarifying terms for genitalia in child sexual abuse interviews. *Australian Psychologist*, 49, 297-304. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12068>
- Burrows, K. S. & Powell, M. B. (2015). Prosecutors' perspectives on clarifying sexual acts in child abuse interviews. *Psychiatry, Psychology & Law*, 22, 903-911. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2015.1019332>
- Burrows, K. S., Powell, M. B., & Anglim, J. (2013). Facilitating child witness interviewers' understanding of evidential requirements through prosecutor instruction. *International Journal of Police Science & Management*, 15, 263-272. <https://doi.org/10.1350/ijps.2013.15.4.316>
- Burrows, K.S., Powell, M.B., & Benson, M. (2016). A guide to clarifying evidence in Australian child forensic interviews. *Journal of Forensic Practice*, 18, 91-103. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFP-09-2014-0030>
- Cauchi, R. T., Powell, M. B., & Hughes-Scholes, C. H. (2010). A controlled analysis of professionals' contemporaneous notes of interviews about alleged child abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34, 318-323. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2009.09.016>
- Cederborg, A. C., & Lamb, M. (2008). Interviewing alleged victims with intellectual disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 52, 49-58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2788.2007.00976.x>

- Christensen, L. S. (2016). Pathway to justice: Examining the attrition of child sexual abuse cases (No. PhD.). Deakin University.
- Clark, H. (2010). 'What is the justice system willing to offer?': Understanding sexual assault victim/survivors' criminal justice needs. *Family Matters*, 85, 28-37. Retrieved from <https://aifs.gov.au/publications/family-matters/issue-85>
- Danby, M. C., Brubacher, S. P., Sharman, S. J., & Powell, M. B. (2015). The effects of practice on children's ability to apply ground rules in a narrative interview. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 33, 446-458. <https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.2194>
- Davies, G. M., Westcott, H. L., & Horan, N. (2000). The impact of questioning style on the content of investigative interviews with suspected child sexual abuse victims. *Psychology, Crime and Law*, 6, 81-97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10683160008410834>
- Davis, G., Hoyano, L., Keenan, C., Maitland, L., & Morgan, R. (1999). *An assessment of the admissibility and sufficiency of evidence in child abuse prosecutions*. London: Department of Law, University of Bristol.
- Davis, D., & Leo, R. (2017). A damning cascade of investigative errors. In F. Brookman, E. R. Maguire, & M. Maguire (Eds.), *The handbook of homicide* (pp. 578-598). Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- Dickinson, J. J., Brubacher, S. P., & Poole, D. A. (2015). Children's performance on ground rules questions: Implications for forensic interviewing. *Law and Human Behavior*, 39, 87-97. <https://doi.org/10.1037/lhb0000119>
- Duke, M. C., Uhl, E. R., Price, H., & Wood, J. M. (2016). Avoiding problems in child abuse interviews and investigations. In W. T. O'Donohue & M. Fanetti (Eds.), *Forensic interviews regarding child sexual abuse: A guide to evidence-based practice* (pp. 219-236). Cham, Switzerland: Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-21097-1\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-21097-1_12)

- Earhart, B., Danby, M. C., Brubacher, S. P., Powell, M. B., & Sharman, S. (2018). A comparison of responses to substantive transition prompts in interviews with children. *Child Maltreatment*, 23, 221-225. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559518756827>
- Fisher, R. P. (2010). Interviewing cooperative witnesses. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 15, 25-38. <https://doi.org/10.1348/135532509X441891>
- Fisher, R. P., & Geiselman, R. E. (1992). *Memory-enhancing techniques for investigative interviewing: The cognitive interview*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Garry, M., & Wade, K. A. (2005). Actually, a picture is worth less than 45 words: Narratives produce more false memories than photographs do. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 12, 359-366. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03196385>
- Guadagno, B., Powell, M. B. & Wright, R. (2006). Police officers' and legal professionals' perceptions regarding how children are, and should be, questioned about repeated abuse. *Psychiatry, Psychology & Law*, 13, 251-260. <https://doi.org/10.1375/pplt.13.2.251>
- Hamilton, G., Brubacher, S. P., & Powell, M. B. (2016a). Investigative interviewing of Aboriginal children in cases of suspected sexual abuse. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 25, 363-381. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2016.1158762>
- Hamilton, G., Brubacher, S. P., & Powell, M. B. (2016b). The effects of practice narratives in interviews with Australian Aboriginal children. *Investigative Interviewing: Research and Practice*, 8, 31-44. Retrieved from <https://www.iiirg.org/journal/>
- Hamilton, G., Powell, M. B., Brubacher, S. P. (2016). Professionals' perceptions regarding the suitability of investigative interview protocols with Aboriginal children. *Australian Psychologist*, 52, 174-183. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ap.12196>
- Kahneman, D. (2011). *Thinking, fast and slow*. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.



- Lamb, M. E., Brown, D. A., Hershkowitz, I., Orbach, Y., & Esplin, P. W. (2018). *Tell me what happened: Questioning children about abuse* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Lamb, M.E., Hershkowitz, I., Orbach, Y., & Esplin, P.W. (Eds.) (2008). *Tell me what happened: Structured investigative interviews of child victims and witnesses*. Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- La Rooy, D., Brown, D., & Lamb, M. E. (2013). Suggestibility and witness interviewing using the Cognitive Interview and NICHD Protocol. In A. M. Ridley, F. Gabbert, & D. J. La Rooy. *Suggestibility in legal contexts: Psychological research and forensic implications* (pp. 197-216). Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- La Rooy, D., Brubacher, S. P., Aromäki-Stratos, A., Cyr, M., Hershkowitz, I., Korkman, J., ... & Lamb, M. E. (2015). The NICHD protocol: A review of an internationally-used evidence-based tool for child forensic interviews. *Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice*, 1, 76-89. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCRPP-01-2015-0001>
- Lin, C., Platt, F. W., Hardee, J. T., Boyle, D., Leslie, B., & Dwinnell, B. (2005). The medical inquiry: Invite, listen, summarize. *Journal of Clinical Outcomes Management*, 12, 415-418. Retrieved from [turner-white.com](http://turner-white.com)
- Loftus, E. F. (2018). Eyewitness science and the legal system. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, 14, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-101317-030850>
- Lyon, T. (2005). Ten step investigative interview, version 2. Retrieved from: <https://works.bepress.com/thomaslyon/5/>
- Maroni, B. (2011). Pauses, gaps and wait time in classroom interaction in primary schools. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43, 2081-2093. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.12.006>

- Martin, A., Bloch, M. H., & Volkmar, F. R. (2017). *Lewis's child and adolescent psychiatry: A comprehensive textbook* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer
- Ministry of Justice. (2011). *Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings: Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures*. London, UK: Home Office.
- Murphy, K., & Barkworth, J. (2014). Victim willingness to report crime to police: Does procedural justice or outcome matter most? *Victims & Offenders*, 9, 178-204. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2013.872744>
- Murphy, K., Mazerolle, L., & Bennett, S. (2014). Promoting trust in police: Findings from a randomised experimental field trial of procedural justice policing. *Policing and Society*, 24, 405-424. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2013.862246>
- National Children's Advocacy Center. (2019). *National Children's Advocacy Center's Child Forensic Interview structure*. Retrieved from [https://www.nationalcac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NCAC\\_CFIS\\_Feb-2019.pdf](https://www.nationalcac.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/NCAC_CFIS_Feb-2019.pdf)
- Navarro, C., Knight, T., Sharman, S. J., & Powell, M. (2019). Challenges in translating interview protocols for child victims to different languages: A case study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 94, 104033. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104033>
- Pawson, R. (2006). *Evidence-based policy: a realist perspective*. London, UK: Sage.
- Pichler, A. S., Sharman, S. J., Powell, M., Westera, N., & Goodman-Delahunty, J. (2019). Association between interview quality and child sexual abuse trial outcome. *Journal of Family Violence*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-019-00051-5>
- Pipe, M. E., Orbach, Y., Lamb, M. E., Abbott, C. B., & Stewart, H. (2013). Do case outcomes change when investigative interviewing practices change? *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 19, 179-190. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030312>

- Powell, M. B. (2003). A guide to introducing the topic of an interview about abuse with a child. *Australian Police Journal*, 57, 259-263. Retrieved from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/version/188818827>
- Powell, M. B. (2008). Designing effective training programs for investigative interviewers of children. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 20, 189-208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2008.12035804>
- Powell, M. B., & Barnett, M. (2015). Elements underpinning successful implementation of a national best-practice child investigative interviewing framework. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, 22, 368-377. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2014.951112>
- Powell, M. B., & Earhart, B. (2018). Principles to enhance communication with child witnesses. *Judicial Officers Bulletin*, 30, 85-90. Retrieved from <https://search.informit.com.au/fullText;dn=939318104638180;res=IELAPA>
- Powell, M. B., Fisher, R. P., & Wright, R. (2005). Investigative interviewing. In N. Brewer & K. Williams (Eds.), *Psychology and law: An empirical perspective* (pp. 11- 42). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Powell, M. B., Garry, M. & Brewer, N. (2013). Eyewitness testimony. In I. Freckelton & H. Selby (Eds.), *Expert evidence: Law, practice, procedure and advocacy* (pp. 65-1–65-5072). Pyrmont, NSW: Thomson Reuters.
- Powell, M. B, Roberts, K. & Guadagno, B. (2007). Particularisation of child abuse offences: Common problems when questioning child witnesses. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 19, 64-74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2007.12036415>
- Powell, M. B., & Snow, P. C. (2007a). Guide to questioning children during the free-narrative phase of an investigative interview. *Australian Psychologist*, 42, 57-65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00050060600976032>

- Powell, M., & Snow, P. (2007b). Recommendations for eliciting a disclosure of abuse from a young child. *Australian Police Journal*, 61, 76-80. Retrieved from [pdfs.semanticscholar.org](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org)
- Powell, M., Westera, N., Goodman-Delahunty, J., & Pichler, A.S. (2016). *An evaluation of how evidence is elicited from complainants of child sexual abuse*. Sydney, Australia: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. Retrieved September 11, 2019, from <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/media-releases/criminal-justice-research-reports-released>
- Price, H. L., Roberts, K. P., & Collins, A. (2013). The quality of children's allegations of abuse in investigative interviews containing practice narratives. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 2, 1-6.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jarmac.2012.03.001>
- Quas, J. A., Stolzenberg, S. N., & Lyon, T. D. (2018). The effects of promising to tell the truth, the putative confession, and recall and recognition questions on maltreated and non-maltreated children's disclosure of a minor transgression. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 166, 266-279.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2017.08.014>
- Roberts, K. P., Brubacher, S. P., Powell, M. B., & Price, H. L. (2011). Practice narratives. In M.E. Lamb, D. J. La Rooy, L. C. Malloy & C. Katz (Eds.), *Children's testimony: A handbook of psychological research and forensic practice* (2nd ed., pp. 129-146). Chichester, UK: Wiley.
- Roberts, K. P., Lamb, M. E., & Sternberg, K. J. (2004). The effects of rapport-building style on children's reports of a staged event. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 18, 189-202.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.957>

- Saywitz, K. J., & Camparo, L. B. (2014). *Evidence-based child forensic interviewing: The developmental narrative elaboration interview*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Saywitz, K. J., Wells, C. R., Larson, R. P., & Hobbs, S. D. (2019). Effects of interviewer support on children's memory and suggestibility: Systematic review and meta-analyses of experimental research. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 20*, 22-39.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838016683457>
- Sharman, S. J., & Powell, M. B. (2012). A comparison of adult witnesses' suggestibility across various types of leading questions. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 26*, 48-53.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.1793>
- Snell, L. (2003). *Child advocacy centers: One stop on the road to performance-based child protection* (Reason Foundation Policy Study No. 306). Retrieved from  
<https://reason.org/policy-study/child-advocacy-centers/>
- Snook, B., Eastwood, J., Stinson, M., Tedeschini, J., & House, J. C. (2010). Reforming investigative interviewing in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice, 52*, 215-229. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjccj.52.2.215>
- Snow, P., & Powell, M. (2012). Youth (in)justice: Oral language competence in early life and risk for engagement in antisocial behaviour in adolescence. *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, 435*, pp. 1-6, Australian Institute of Criminology. Retrieved from <https://aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi435>
- Stahl, R. J. (1994). Using "think-time" and "wait-time" skilfully in the classroom. *ERIC Digest*, ERIC Reproduction Service No. ED 370 885. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED370885>
- State of Michigan Governor's Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect and Department of Human Services. (2017). *Forensic interviewing protocol* (4th ed.). Retrieved from [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/DHS-PUB-0779\\_211637\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/DHS-PUB-0779_211637_7.pdf)

- Stein, N. L., & Glenn, C. G. (1979). An analysis of story comprehension in elementary school children. In R. O. Freedle (Ed.). *New directions in discourse processing* (pp. 53-120). New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation.
- Stennes, L. M., Burch, M. M., Sen, M. G., & Bauer, P. J. (2005). A longitudinal study of gendered vocabulary and communicative action in young children. *Developmental Psychology*, 41, 75-88. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0012-1649.41.1.75>
- Sternberg, K., Lamb, M., Esplin, P., Orbach, Y., & Hershkowitz, I. (2002). Using a structured protocol to improve the quality of investigative interviews. In M. Eisen, J. Quas, & G. Goodman (Eds.), *Memory and suggestibility in the forensic interview* (pp. 409-436). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Sternberg, K. J., Lamb, M. E., Hershkowitz, I., Yudilevitch, L., Orbach, Y., Esplin, P. W., & Hovav, M. (1997). Effects of introductory style on children's abilities to describe experiences of sexual abuse. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 21, 1133-1146. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0145-2134\(97\)00071-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0145-2134(97)00071-9)
- Sternberg, K. J., Lamb, M. E., Orbach, Y., Esplin, P. W., & Mitchell, S. (2001). Use of a structured investigative protocol enhances young children's responses to free-recall prompts in the course of forensic interviews. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86, 997-1005. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.5.997>
- S v. R. 168 CLR 266 (1989).
- Sweller, J. (1988). Cognitive load during problem solving: Effects on learning. *Cognitive Science*, 12, 257-285. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0364-0213\(88\)90023-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0364-0213(88)90023-7)
- Talwar, V., & Crossman, A. M. (2012). Children's lies and their detection: Implications for child witness testimony. *Developmental Review*, 32, 337-359. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2012.06.004>

- Teoh, Y. S., & Lamb, M. E. (2010). Preparing children for investigative interviews: Rapport-building, instruction, and evaluation. *Applied Developmental Science, 14*, 154-163.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2010.494463>
- Thompson, S. K. (1975). Gender labels and early sex role development. *Child Development, 1975, 46*, 339-347. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1128126>
- Vallano J. P., & Schreiber Compo N. (2015). Rapport-building with cooperative witnesses and criminal suspects: A theoretical and empirical review. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law, 21*, 85-99. <https://doi.org/10.1037/law0000035>
- Vrij, A., Hope, L., & Fisher, R. P. (2014). Eliciting reliable information in investigative interviews. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 1*, 129-136.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2372732214548592>
- Walsh, D., Oxburgh, G. E., Redlich, A. D., & Myklebust, T. (Eds.). (2016a). International developments and practices in investigative interviewing and interrogation: Volume 1: Victims and Witnesses. New York, USA: Routledge.
- Westera, N. J., Keibell, M. R., & Milne, B. (2016). Want a better criminal justice response to rape? Improve police interviews with complainants and suspects. *Violence Against Women, 22*, 1748-1769. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801216631439>
- Westera, N. J., Powell, M. B., & Milne, B. (2017). Lost in the detail: Prosecutors' perceptions of the utility of video recorded police interviews as rape complainant evidence. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology, 50*, 252-268.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0004865815620705>
- Whiting, B. F., & Price, H. L. (2017). Practice narratives enhance children's memory reports. *Psychology, Crime & Law, 23*, 730-747.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2017.1324031>

- Yii, S.B., Powell, M.B., & Guadagno, B. (2014). The association between investigative interviewers' knowledge of question type and adherence to best-practice interviewing. *Legal and Criminological Psychology, 19*, 270-281.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/lcrp.12000>
- Yuille, J. C., Cooper, B. S., & Hervé, H. F. (2009). The step-wise guidelines for child interviews: The new generation. In M. Casonato & F. Pfafflin (Eds.), *Pedoparafi: Psychological perspectives, forensic psychiatric* (pp. 120-141, translated by Giulia Cordano and published in Italian). Italy: Franco Angeli.
- Zekiroski, H. (2019). *Association between offence type and open-ended question type among frontline officers, 2018-2019*. [Data file and coding manual]. Brisbane, Australia: Centre for Investigative Interviewing.