

Forensic Interviews With Children Victims of Sexual Abuse: The Role of the Counselling Psychologist

Olga Themeli^{*a}, Maria Panagiotaki^b

[a] Department of Psychology, University of Crete, Rethymnon, Greece. [b] Youth Counselling Centre, Department of Secondary Education, Heraklion, Greece.

Abstract

Although there is plenty of literature on the consequences of child sexual abuse, little research has been conducted regarding the risk of secondary victimization when a child victim testifies as a witness throughout the preliminary proceeding to the police, as well as the hearing in the court room. Even today, the credibility of the testimony of a child witness is strongly questioned. Child witnesses are often treated with greater distrust than adult witnesses as, according to traditional views, they don't have the same observing and mnemonic ability, they are more vulnerable to leading questions and they have difficulty in distinguishing reality from fantasy as well as truth from lie. The whole of literature emphasizes the responsibility of the interviewer who will determine the course of the interview and have a significant effect upon the disclosure procedure. His personal characteristics as well as his specialized knowledge and counselling skills will play a major role. Studies have demonstrated that empathy, patience, calm, sensitivity and warmth on the part of the interviewer are instrumental in rapport building and effective communication with the child. These qualities play a crucial role in obtaining a credible testimony and, at the same time, protecting the child from the risk of secondary victimization. The referred case study displays the need for the application of appropriate forensic interview techniques, as well as for the participation, specifically, of a counselling psychologist, as opposed to any mental health professional.

Keywords: child sexual abuse, disclosure, forensic interview, empathy, rapport building, secondary victimization

The European Journal of Counselling Psychology, 2014, Vol. 3(1), 1–19, doi:10.5964/ejcop.v3i1.17

Received: 2013-06-28. Accepted: 2013-11-01. Published (VoR): 2014-03-28.

*Corresponding author at: Department of Psychology, University of Crete, 741 00, Gallos, Rethymnon, Greece. E-mail: themeli@uoc.gr



This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Introduction

In the last decades, international literature has highlighted the risk of secondary victimization of children abuse victims following disclosure of their violation and their inevitable involvement in procedures that significantly aggravate their condition (Bruck, Melnyk, & Ceci, 2000; Saywitz & Nathanson, 1993; Tedesco & Schnell, 1987). Unfortunately, even today – despite the findings of the scientific community – children are frequently considered to be "second class" witnesses (Davies & Noon, 1991), as their credibility and their mnemonic ability are considerably questioned. These are, obviously, out-dated views that worsen the condition of the children and obstruct the detection of the truth.

Research on an international level seems to focus on the cognitive function of children's memory and the way in which it may be biased, despite the "suffering" inferred by their participation in the Criminal Justice System (Tedesco & Schnell, 1987). It is estimated that, only during the preliminary proceedings, a child victim of sexual abuse will present for questioning an average of 12 times (Ceci & Bruck, 1995). It is an extremely difficult and, at the same

time, painful procedure throughout which children are encouraged to talk about the most traumatic experience of their lives to people they are not familiar with (Bruck, Melnyk, & Ceci, 2000).

On an international level, the majority of abused children interview protocols provide for the presence of a psychologist in all stages of the criminal procedure. Professionals, depending on their approach, may influence, mislead, undermine, lead or hurt the children.

By-passing an initial preparation stage, which is important in establishing an atmosphere of trust and safety, misuse of techniques and methodological tools, multiple interviews by different people and their multiple repetitions, the use of leading questions, the adoption of unreliable techniques by professionals without appropriate training, the non-observance of a basic code of ethics, lead to the development of excessive stress, distortion of memory, decrease of the credibility of the child's testimony, and, consequently, diminished possibilities of conviction of the perpetrator (Krähenbühl & Blades, 2006; Wood & Garven, 2000).

The psychologist who will examine the allegations of abused children must demonstrate empathy and flexibility in using, often, different types of approaches, and act always in the best interest of the child, with a view to the protection of its rights. To that effect, the maturity of the minor, the age, the particularities, the nature of the violation, the cultural framework, the characteristics of the case etc. must be taken into consideration. The role of the counselling psychologist seems to be of utmost importance for ascertaining the truth as well as for the protection of the child victim from possible re-traumatisation.

The Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome

Outcomes of studies demonstrate the devastating consequences of violence in childhood, especially when it occurs within the family. More than half of the children victims suffer from intense emotional distress and behavioural disorders throughout their lives (Graham-Bermann, 2001). Depression (Silvern et al., 1995), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), cognitive dysfunctions (Rossman, 1998) and decreased development of social skills (Edleson, 1999) are reported, among other conditions. Especially when the abuse is sexual, the consequences are dramatic (Banyard, Williams, & Siegel, 2001).

Until recently, there were various myths and stereotypes about the delay in the disclosure of abuse. Even specialists, believed that sexually abused children should be behaving in particular ways during disclosure, otherwise they could not be considered credible. In particular, it was believed that abused children ought to experience intense negative emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, etc. However, in reality, many children victims of abuse appear calm during disclosure (Sayfan, Mitchell, Goodman, Eisen, & Quin, 2008). Delay in the disclosure of the abuse was also considered as a factor that raised questions as to the credibility of minor victims. However, recent studies have indicated that this is a common phenomenon. (Schaeffer, Leventhal, & Asnes, 2011).

According to research findings, 30 to 80 per cent of children refuse to disclose their victimisation until coming of age (Arata, 1998; Paine & Hansen, 2002; Smith et al., 2000). Moreover, numerous studies indicate that the majority of children victims delay extensively the disclosure of their "secret", which would probably never be revealed if it hadn't become known in some other way (Gomes-Schwartz, Horowitz, & Cardarelli, 1990; Kelley, Brand, & Waterman, 1993). Fear of vengeance and feelings of guilt and shame are the most important causes for suspending disclosure.

In the majority of the cases, the absolute dominance of the offender upon the victim and the obedience of the latter, via complete submission and passivity, generate in the victim a feeling of "conspiracy" and complicity. Under these circumstances, the decision for non-disclosure might be irreversible (Furniss, 1991). The absence of visible external injuries in the majority of cases makes sexual abuse extremely difficult for third parties to detect, thus putting the burden of going through the difficult and painful procedure of disclosure, entirely on the child victim (Bussey & Grimbeek, 1995). The maturity, the ability and the will of a child to disclose its victimization play a decisive role in therapeutic intervention as well as in the legal outcome of the case.

Specialized child psychiatrists point out that the degree of trauma suffered by the child depends to a greater extent on the way in which the victim will be treated by his family and the Criminal Justice System following disclosure of the incident, than on the incident itself (Brennan, 1995).

According to findings of studies, the interview is considered as the most important tool for extracting rich and, at the same time, credible information (Davies, Westcott, & Horan, 2000; Hewitt & Arrowood, 1994; Wyatt, 1999). Children themselves report that the establishment of a positive relationship with the interviewer, the support received from him and the sense that they will be believed, are of decisive importance in disclosing their abuse (Back, Gustafsson, Larsson, & Bertero, 2011).

Experts point out that the correct choice and use of the technique applied in each particular case play a decisive role in disclosing the violation suffered by the child as well as in the detection of the truth. How, though, is a child interviewed? Does he/she hide his victimization? How are the setbacks of its disclosure justified? Why does he/she often repeal his/her initial testimony? What skills does the interviewer need to possess?

The entire literature demonstrates that the majority of children victims of sexual abuse conceal the abuse that they have suffered. The percentage of victims that decide to disclose the violation of their sexual freedom is small and, usually, victims are led to this decision after coming of age (Berliner & Conte, 1995; Lamb & Edgar-Smith, 1994). However, the majority never disclose their victimization (Tyler, 2002).

Reference to the "sexual abuse accommodation syndrome" is made, for the first time, in 1983 when the psychiatrist Roland Summit publishes his landmark, in relevant literature, article: "The child sexual abuse accommodation syndrome". In his study, he suggested an investigation model regarding possible intra familial sexual abuse concealment in order to assist experts to comprehend: a) the reasons that children hesitate to disclose the violation suffered and b) "the way that they talk about it", that is, the means by which some victims disclose what has happened to them.

According to Summit (1983), disclosing abuse is a dynamic process that includes five stages ("the stage model"): a) secrecy, b) the formation of a feeling of helplessness, c) the entrapment and accommodation, d) the delay of disclosure (the content of which is not convincing) and e) the disclaiming of the initial statement. The model of the five stages ("the stage model") was adopted by specialized professionals and played a decisive role in the formation of guidelines and tools regarding diagnosis and evaluation of sexual abuse. In addition, many experts rely on it in order to help children disclose the violation suffered (London, Bruck, Ceci, & Shuman, 2005).

Which are the dominant factors in disclosure of the violation? The tracking down of the factors that prevent disclosure of the abuse as well as those that encourage it has attracted the interest of many researchers worldwide. Among these factors, we find:

- Age (Bussey & Grimbeek, 1995)
- Sex (DeVoe & Faller, 1999)
- The rapport between victim and victimizer (Arata, 1998)
- The cultural background – the nationality of the victim (Futa, Hsu, & Hansen, 2001)
- The fear of vengeance (Sauzier, 1989).
- The stress concerning possible negative reactions by parents (Palmer, Brown, Rae-Grant, & Loughlin, 1999; Schaeffer, Leventhal, & Asnes, 2011)
- The feeling of complicity and responsibility (Finkelhor, Hotelling, Lewis, & Smith, 1990)
- The effects of post-traumatic stress (Koverola & Foy, 1994)
- The particular characteristics of the violation (Faller, 2007; Sauzier, 1989)
- The views and beliefs of the child's carers (Lawson & Chaffin, 1992)
- The sex of the interviewer (Lamb & Garretson, 2003)
- The way in which the interview is conducted (Lamb, Orbach, Sternberg, Espilin, & Hershkowitz, 2002)

The Role of the Counselling Psychologist

Literature underlines that the characteristics of the interviewer play a critical role in the credibility of the testimonies and the amount of information that can be extracted. Excellent command of counselling skills is necessary. A good professional must, mainly, have a highly developed capacity for empathy, an ability to interact with children as well as an ability to encourage them and to boost their self-esteem. Moreover, he/she should always bear in mind the best interest of the child and the protection of its rights. Also, he/she should take into consideration the maturity of the child, its age, its particularities, the type of the violation, the cultural background and the particular characteristics of the case.

Studies have demonstrated that patience, calm, sensitivity and warmth are crucial in building rapport and genuine communication with the child. These are important features in order to obtain a credible testimony (Cronch, Viljoen, & Hansen, 2006). It has also been pointed out that children who are questioned within a familiar environment by an efficient and specially trained interviewer, and who have been appropriately prepared for what is about to follow, testify with more credibility (Melton & Thompson, 1987).

Professionals involved in the investigation of a child's allegations will not be able to choose or even apply their methodological tools properly and effectively unless they possess certain knowledge of developmental psychology issues as well as of special issues regarding the function of the basic cognitive mechanisms (attention, perception, memory etc). Actually, the cases of sexual abuse demand extensive knowledge and training in order to build a good rapport with the child.

Before the Interview

The preparatory work for the forensic interview and the preparation of the interviewer that will have contact with the child, are of utmost importance.

The preparatory phase of the interview aims at building a warm rapport with the child as well as establishing an atmosphere that will facilitate the latter's actual participation. It is vital that the interviewer is acquainted with the child before commencing the procedure of the main forensic interview and has comprehended his role as well as

the objective of their cooperation. It is considered necessary to keep records that will include information concerning the age of the child, its family, its level of development, the possible existence of health problems and traumas, its school performance, its cultural background, its possible malfunctions with regard to basic skills such as the use of language, etc. Before meeting for the first time, it is useful to draft a list of the most important requisites that the interview needs to make clear (Saywitz & Camparo, 1998).

In order to achieve rapport building, the interviewer explains to the child that what is about to be discussed will not be disclosed, but that some justice professionals may be notified for his own safety. In this way, first, the child is prepared for what may follow and, secondly, the possible feeling that his trust has been betrayed is avoided. During this preliminary stage of acquaintance, it is recommended to discuss "trouble-free" issues so that the child gets to feel comfortable and relaxed, and to avoid direct reference to the issue under investigation.

According to certain views, the interviewer should know nothing about the child or the facts before the first interview, as prior knowledge might have essential influence on him, thus rendering him biased and liable to pose leading questions (Bruck & Ceci, 1995). In any case, literature as a whole concurs that the interviewer should maintain an objective and unbiased standpoint (APSAC, 2002; Cronch, Viljoen, & Hansen, 2006; Saywitz, Geiselman, & Bornstein, 1992).

Although the rapport building with the child is of utmost importance, many interviewers fail in it and, therefore, move to the next phase of the investigation with great difficulty. Empathy is considered to be a significant factor in establishing a positive environment that will relieve and comfort the victimized child, which, in turn, will contribute significantly to the quality of the interview. It is, therefore, important that the interviewer uses phrases that demonstrate his understanding of the difficult and painful position the child is in and that he avoids comments that might underestimate the situation that the child is experiencing. Existing empirical studies on this subject are very few but they all advocate that the most important factor is to build rapport with communication and sympathy. The friendly body position and eye contact combined with the smile of the adult might encourage the victimized child to express himself more securely (Carter, Bottoms, & Levine, 1996).

Studies have also indicated that the environment affects the communication, the concentration and the memory of children – especially those of preschool age. They point out their tendency to react differently in different settings and to feel better in familiar places (Ceci, Bronfenbrenner, & Baker, 1988).

The setting must be child-friendly, with furniture at the children's height, and without strong stimuli that might distract their attention. Visual and audio stimulations might easily distract the attention of younger children affecting significantly their speech and cognitive functions. Disturbance from third parties and interruption of the interview for any reason (such as answering the telephone) must be strictly avoided.

The Main Phase of the Interview

The way in which the interview is conducted (Lamb, Orbach, Sternberg, Espilin, & Hershkowitz, 2002) will constitute the backbone of any successful effort to pursue the truth and respect childhood.

All studies converge in that professionals have a duty to make every possible effort to adapt the requirements of the interview to the developmental level and the particular skills of the child (Brennan & Brennan, 1988; Saywitz & Camparo, 1998). Unfortunately, experience shows that, in many cases, children are treated like adults and this inevitably leads to many mistakes and misunderstandings.

Before the interview commences, the professional must, on the one hand, set the rules, making clear to the child that they should be followed, and, on the other hand, the assisting guidelines in the form of instructions ([Northern Ireland Office, 1999](#)):

- To solely refer to what has actually happened without making assumptions
- To listen to the questions carefully without any rush
- Not to hesitate to point out any question that has not been comprehended
- To know that the child can interrupt and correct the interviewer
- To understand that the interviewer was not present at the incident and so it is not possible to be aware of the details
- To report anything he can recall, even something that might seem unimportant
- To acknowledge that he can say "I don't know" if he really doesn't know
- To try to give the best of himself

The evaluation of the level of development of the child victim that is interviewed is required in order to choose the appropriate interview techniques. International research literature highlights that questions which do not take into consideration the developmental level of the child may trigger a misleading drawing out of information ([Goodman, Bottoms, Schwartz-Kennedy, & Rudy, 1991](#); [Saywitz & Snyder, 1993](#)). It is often the case that official representatives of social control fail to adapt the requirements of the interview to the developmental level of the child and its distinctive skills ([Saywitz & Camparo, 1998](#)).

The “deficits” of pre-school age children, such as their limited memory and linguistic skills, their suggestibility, the function of the imagination and their increased trust and respect of adults have raised concern and debates within the scientific community, concerning the credibility of young children ([Brilleslijper-Kater, Friedrich, & Corwin, 2004](#); [Dunn, 2006](#)). However, more recent studies indicate that it is not these qualities themselves that affect the credibility of children’s testimony, but rather the interviewers’ approach during forensic interviews. The testimony of preschool age children presents qualitative differences from that of older children, but does not lack precision and credibility ([Battin, Ceci, & Lust, 2012](#); [Dunn, 2006](#)).

Difficulties arise with regard to the comprehension of the legal terminology used especially during the preliminary proceedings, leading experts to suggest that a sort of “linguistic discrimination” is deliberately taking place at the expense of children, as their linguistic development is not taken into account ([Brennan, 1995](#)). The above are highlighted in a study demonstrating that minors under the age of 15 comprehend half of what is being said inside the courtroom ([Brennan & Brennan, 1988](#)).

However, age should not be considered as the safest standard for determining the skills and the specific needs of the minor victims. Due to the differences among children of the same age, it is important to conduct an individual evaluation. Given that it is possible that a child may be more mature in one cognitive area and, simultaneously, fall short in another, it is recommended that interviewers are flexible and avoid attaching themselves strictly to age limits and specialized protocols.

The interviewer should, initially, give the child the opportunity to relate what happened in his own words. The free narrative of events is the most important part of the forensic interview and its importance is emphasized in almost all structured interview protocols ([Harborview Center for Sexual Assault & Traumatic Stress, WA State Criminal Justice Training Commission in cooperation with the WA State Department of Social and Health Services, 2007](#);

Home Office, 2011; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 1999; Scottish Executive, St Andrew's House, 2003; State of Michigan, 2005). According to experts, letting the children simply talk about what happened to them, increases the possibilities of collecting significant information, which might be missed in a strictly structured interview (Faller, 2007). In subsequent stages, the interviewer collects information clarifying the issues that seem particularly important in investigating the case, by using specific questions.

The interviewer must pay special attention in choosing the type of questions that he will pose as well as their arrangement. The type of question posed, the way it is posed and the content of the question play a key role in the recall of information and in drawing out a credible testimony (Bull, 2010; Harborview Center for Sexual Assault & Traumatic Stress et al., 2007; Phillips, Oxburgh, Gavin, & Myklebust, 2012; State of Michigan, 2005).

Even the frequency with which the questions are posed, the time interceding between them, the manner of the interviewer and the duration of the interview are factors that may have a significant influence upon the memory of the minor. Attention must also be paid to the use of repeated questions, as the child might feel that the answers provided are not "right" or "desired", resulting in annulling its primary grounds (Faller, 2007).

Experts are encouraged to commence the interview with open-ended questions of general content passing later to open-ended questions related to the issue under investigation, thus encouraging a free narrative of events (Faller, 2003, 2007; Feltis, Powell, Snow, & Hughes-Scholes, 2010; Lamb & Sternberg, 1999). Open-ended questions offer the child the opportunity to report the incident in the greatest possible detail and at the same time to be in charge of the narration. They are preferable to closed questions as they minimize the risk of suggestibility, and therefore, lead to more credible answers (Patterson & Pipe, 2009). More specifically, answers to this type of questions are more likely to be longer, more-detailed, more accurate and less ambiguous, while the questions themselves may be repeated without risking distortion of the credibility of the answer (Katz & Hamama, 2013).

In addition, they ex officio preclude the possibility of any form of pressure on the part of the interviewer, making the child feel better (Northern Ireland Office, 1999). Closed questions are chosen in order to extract more specific details about what has happened. In forensic interviews, it is useful to pose questions on the particular subject of who, when, what, how etc. ("How did you get there?", "Who put you in the room?", "What is his name?", "What happened there?" etc.) (Faller, 2007).

Given that minors are evidently more vulnerable to leading questions than adults, it is important to keep a tight rein on their use (Ceci & Leichtman, 1992). At the same time, the majority of experts point out that these questions must be avoided and should constitute a last choice, when all other alternatives have been exhausted (Saywitz & Camparo, 1998).

In order to minimize the risk of refusal to testify, distortion of memory or traumatization of the child, it is significant to go along with the following rules (Bruck & Ceci, 1995; Child Witness Project, 1995; Davies & Westcott, 1999; Sas, Hurley, Hatch, Malla, & Dick, 1993; Saywitz, 1995):

- The use of language that takes into consideration the age of the child
- The use of examples so that the child is assisted in comprehending the question
- The use of short sentences – the posing of short questions
- The use of simple tenses and moods
- The use of clear and comprehensible pronunciation

- The avoidance of multiple testimonies of the child
- The avoidance of posing leading and misleading questions
- The avoidance of repeating questions that have already been answered
- The encouragement of free narrative
- The avoidance of techniques that slip information into the memory of the child with the intention of distorting it
- The avoidance of an austere tone and an inflexible attitude on the part of the interviewer

We set out epigrammatically some important and useful scientific findings that a professional should be aware of and take seriously into consideration:

- The cognitive functions of perception, attention and memory have significant subjective coefficients (Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Loftus, 1979). The same holds for the mechanisms of storing and recalling information (Williams & Hollan, 1981). The limited storage prospects of short-term as well as long term memory, the period of containment, the type of recollection, the number of attempts to recollect, the subsequent to the incident interpositions and the leading questions often result in memory distortion.
- The possibilities of adaptation and distortion increase when memory lacks in stored information and when a long period of time has passed since the investigated incident (Marche, 1999; Pezdek & Hodge, 1999).
- The traumatic events in a child's life improve the memory's accuracy (Goodman et al., 1991; Steward & Steward, 1996) and are stored for a longer period of time than usual everyday phenomena (Pipe, Lamb, Orbach, & Esplin, 2004).
- The possibilities of memory modification with the addition of information posterior to the incident under investigation are the same for children and adults (Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Loftus, 1979)
- The amount of information that is freely recalled by children aged 12-18 is as satisfactory as that of adults (Clifford, 1993).
- Stress is causally connected with the risk of memory distortion and false recall of the required information (Tedesco & Schnell, 1987).
- Children, compared to adults, show evidence of increased levels of fear and stress during the preliminary proceedings as well as the hearing (Tedesco & Schnell, 1987).
- Children, compared to adults, are more vulnerable to leading questions (Ceci & Leichtman, 1992) and display significant problems in comprehending the questions due to the inappropriate use of language (Goodman et al., 1991).
- Children who go to school seem to disclose the violation experienced with more clarity and credibility (DiPietro, Runynan, & Fredrickson, 1997).
- The capacity for recollection of pre-school children is not as thorough, compared to older children (Fivush, 1997).
- Children make fewer "mistakes in controlling the source of information" when they exercise free recollection than when specific questions are posed to them (Roberts & Powell, 2001).

Clarification of Roles

Concerning mental health professionals, the clarification of their role is necessary, as they are often involved both in the forensic and in the clinical/therapeutic aspect of cases of child sexual abuse (Poole & Lamb, 1998; Raskin & Esplin, 1991). As often emphasized, there are significant differences between the forensic and the clinical evaluation, as the former refers to specific procedures of the criminal justice system, while the latter to mental health and therapeutic intervention (Faller, 2007).

Although serious difficulties often emerge in trying to distinguish the roles of the forensic psychologist and the psychotherapist and to differentiate the techniques for investigating abuse and for providing therapy, the distinction between the forensic evaluation of a child and the clinical assessment and intervention is indisputable (Faller, 2007). In the forensic evaluation, the professional, investigates facts and seeks to establish what happened and how it happened, based on structured interview protocols, focusing primarily on the actual events that took place and less on their effects on the child's psychosocial health (Kuehnle, 1996; Sattler, 1998). Clinical psychologists and therapists, on the other hand, focus on clinical assessment and therapeutic intervention, using different techniques; they may be more flexible and may adopt a less neutral and more actively supportive approach towards the child.

Concerning, more specifically, the role of the counselling psychologist, we would suggest that the counselling psychologist may participate in the forensic procedure in three different roles:

a) The role of an interviewer. In this case he/she prepares and conducts himself the forensic interview. A good professional should mainly possess a highly developed capacity for empathy, the ability to interact with children as well as flexibility in using different types of approaches. A psychologist specialized in counselling psychology has developed these skills particularly. His/her specialized knowledge and use of counselling techniques are particularly useful as they will contribute significantly to creating an atmosphere of trust between him/her and the child, encouraging the free narrative of events, using open-ended questions and avoiding closed and leading questions. Thus, for instance, by using empathy and reflecting emotions, he/she can approach the child in a warm manner and gain the latter's trust. By using effectively the technique of paraphrasing, he/she may assist the child in responding to open questions in a more complete and detailed manner. By the use of body language, minor verbal encouragement, prompting and nodding, he/she may facilitate the production of more precise and detailed information. At this point, however, it should be noted that the role of the counselling psychologist in the forensic interview may be primarily supportive, but not therapeutic.

b) The role of a trainer. The counselling psychologist provides training to professionals who will conduct forensic interviews, in developing essential counseling skills such as empathy. He/she may also provide training in the use by professionals of non-verbal communication (e.g., eye contact, facial expressions and body posture). The counselling psychologist may also train professionals in avoiding common mistakes that inhibit communication (e.g., avoid an "interrogational" style, giving orders, being judgmental, moralizing, threatening, stigmatizing or humiliating the person questioned).

c) The role of an appropriate adult, supporting the child. The counselling psychologist prepares the child for the forensic interview, informs him about the procedure, and accompanies him throughout the interview. The aim of this is to diminish the child's anxiety, to be a person of reference that will comfort the child, provide a sense of safety, and help him/her respond with more self-confidence. He/she provides to the child encouragement and support when needed, while, at the same time, assists the interviewer in dealing with serious problems that may arise during the interview (e.g., what should he do if the child starts crying, or does not want to continue the interview, does not comprehend the questions asked, appears to reply only in order to please the interviewer, etc.)

A Case Study

Two years ago, two migrant children went to the police station of a small country town in order to report their sexual abuse. After several months of investigation, the police was led to the residence of the offender and arrested

him whilst he was molesting two other thirteen year old boys. The course of events was so overwhelming that it shocked the small town, since the perpetrator was a particularly known and loved person. Interrogations of many months followed and many problems appeared due to the lack of specialized services and professionals that could intervene. In addition, the absence of experts that could assist the children during forensic interviews worsened the situation even more.

The offender was finally charged with sexual assault of 53 minors aged 11-17 years old and was indicted for 48 felonies and 5 misdemeanours of the Penal Code. His activity lasted for more than ten years and it is estimated that even though the number of children that testified was 53, his victims during this period were actually more than 150. A few months ago, the offender was convicted by the criminal court for 46 felonies and 2 misdemeanours at the expense of 53 children and was sentenced to life imprisonment for 401 years, which is the most austere sentence for a man accused for pederasty in Greece.

The Offender

The offender was 48 years old and married with two children of school age. He was a teacher at an elementary school and a coach for the most known minors' basketball team in town. He was one of the most popular residents of the city, with great social recognition, who enjoyed the trust of the local community. He was the kind of mentor that promised his students a future full of success in all aspects of life. He gained admiration and appeared as a hero to the eyes of the children. He promised them that they would be strong and successful, like him, if they obeyed him and followed his instructions.

Taking advantage of his recognition within the local community as well as his professional status, he convinced his students to follow a hard type of training that would turn them into the future champions of basketball. In order to achieve this, they had to go not only through classical training, but also through a procedure of "initiation", as he called it. When some of them succeeded, they became either men, sooner, or "Spartans", as he would characteristically call them during coaching or inside the locker-room. During this "initiation", the students were under severe strains, they were obliged to obey the rules that he imposed and to engage in sexual contact with him and with each other. He used precautions and acted methodically, conducting meetings of short duration that didn't allow his activity to imprint on the boys, or to arouse suspicion to the families of the children, with which he managed to have very good relationships. The locations where he met his victims were not ordinary. Apart from his house, his car or some deserted locations outside the city, the perpetrator led the children to country churches, caves and cemeteries, where he forced them to engage in erotic acts. There were rumours of strange relationships with some children. On this basis, the police started to discreetly collect information, which, as time went by, set the general frame of activity of the teacher and coach, but without being more specific.

The authorities estimate that, for more than ten years, he managed to hide his secret. In his plea, he admitted to having sexual contact with the children. However, he claimed that he didn't abuse them sexually but that he led them to an extreme physical contact that would help them overcome their fears and strengthen their self-esteem. In the court room, he argued that everything had happened with the consent of these students, that he is a political prisoner and that he is tried for his ideas regarding training and championing.

The Victims

The victims were boys aged 11-17 years old and, most of them, either pupils of the school where the perpetrator was teaching, or in the team that he was the coach. Characteristically, he chose handsome children from the

school (he excluded those who were overweight) in order to promote them to the basketball team. The children were subjected to systematic brainwash, during which they were presented with a future life full of success with regards to their career as well as their personal life and were told that they would be "great men" and "authorities", like him. The disclosure of the secret would constitute a betrayal, sign of weakness and lack of manliness. Soon, the children felt trapped, as the perpetrator shifted the responsibility by pointing out that no one forced them or obliged them, since everything happened with their consent. It is characteristic that there were children that defended him by claiming that whatever happened was for their own good.

The boys, afraid of the consequences, kept the secret well hidden for years within the conservative society. The gender of the abused children played a decisive role in their decision not to speak. It is not random that the foreign, and not the local, boys dared to denounce his actions, whose cultural framework seemed to forbid this behaviour. Many of the boys, who disclosed, were beaten by their father while others were bullying victims. Some of them were not considered trustworthy by their families and most of them chose not to speak out of fear or because they thought that they would betray their teacher. The biggest concern of the adults seemed to be the sexual orientation of the boys. It is estimated that the majority of the victims never disclosed what happened to them.

The Procedure of the Forensic Interview

At the beginning, 13 children, and later on 53 children, testified to the city's police department. There were many difficulties because of the lack of police officers trained on forensic interview techniques. The questioning of the children was assigned to an officer who had studied psychology. Although every possible effort was made, the whole procedure of the forensic interview did not follow the basic steps, the basic principles and the code of ethics provided by the international literature. The victims were very scared and confused. The case became known throughout the country and in the local community many names had leaked out.

Unfortunately, apart from a telephone line provided by the municipality, the children didn't receive psychological support before the forensic interview, neither while it lasted, nor after it had finished. After several weeks, the children testified again to the examining judge who also had not had any special training and, two years after that, they testified in court. Although it is provided by the law, the testimony of the children was not videotaped and, thus, the children gave multiple testimonies to different people in different environments.

Today, nobody in the local community discusses what had happened and nobody is aware of the consequences of the sexual abuse and the participation of the children in the penal procedure, which didn't uphold fundamental and basic principles.

Discussion

The above-mentioned case study presents a typical example of what happens in countries that lack specially trained professionals and forensic interview protocols. The specialized training of the professionals conducting forensic examination of sexually abused children is a necessity (Lamb et al., 2009; Powell, Fisher, & Hughes-Scholes, 2008). Amateur handling, in most cases, leads to secondary abuse of the children concerned.

All certified protocols and researchers recommend an official meeting of the professionals involved in the procedure of the interview, before it is conducted, with a view to determining the personal needs and characteristics of the child, the structure of its family, the circumstances of the disclosure, the type of interview that will take place, the place where it will be conducted, its duration, the reasons that require its conduct, the role of the interviewer, the number of interviews, the presence of other people etc. (Scottish Executive, St Andrew's House, 2003).

In general, most protocols-guidelines, point out the need to maintain the following steps:

- Preparation of the interview – preparatory doings
- Preliminary meeting with the minor
- Evaluation of the child's understanding abilities – ability to distinguish truth from false
- Evaluation of the child's developmental stage
- Building a warm rapport and safety between the interviewer and child
- Clarification of the rules of the interview
- Introduction of the issue under investigation
- Encouragement of free narration of events
- Use of questions in order to illustrate the key points and to obtain more information
- Conclusion of the interview

In the case study presented above, the children were immediately introduced to the main subject. It has to be noted that abused children vary with regard to the way in which they disclose elements of their abuse. For this reason, it is of utmost importance that the interviewers adjust the procedure to the personal needs of each child witness (Davies & Westcott, 1999). It is significant to be reminded that the ultimate goal of the forensic interview is to extract credible information as well as to protect the child from the risk of possible re-victimization.

Furthermore, it is very important that a counselling psychologist, and not just any mental health specialist, is present in the forensic interview of children. Professionals that participate in these procedures should receive training in counselling skills. The success of a forensic interview depends not only on the proper use of techniques but also on the ability to build an environment of encouragement and support. Studies have shown that empathy, the demonstration of sensitivity to the needs of the child as well as warmth contribute decisively to the building of rapport and communication with the minor, which are significant qualities for the extraction of a credible testimony (Cronch, Viljoen, & Hansen, 2006).

The counselling psychologist possesses counselling skills that will allow him/her to build rapport with the child and will assist him/her to encourage the child when it is afraid or hesitates to speak. With the skills of empathy and reflection of emotion, he/she will create an environment of safety in which the victim will feel that someone actually cares for what has happened. The counselling psychologist will initially encourage and support the victim in the free narrative of events. The adoption of adequate non-verbal communication will significantly strengthen this effort. Furthermore, he/she will choose the appropriate questions as well as the way to pose them, adjusting them to the needs of the minor.

Unfortunately, in many cases, the non-application of counselling techniques reinforces the interrogatory aspect of the interview. Mental health professionals, often either let the stage of supportive environment building pass or fail to achieve this primary goal and, thus, proceed to the next phase of the enquiry of the main issue with great difficulty. As a result, the testimonies are not credible, poor in details and of limited validity. It is also possible that the minor may not wish to continue with the procedure or, under the burden of these difficulties, renounce his allegation of sexual abuse.

Conclusively, it could be argued that the knowledge of the appropriate techniques comprises the basis of a forensic interview, but the possession of counselling skills constitutes its backbone.

Conclusion

As has been said "the child is not only another witness" (Brennan, 1995). However, children abuse victims are often exposed to procedures tailored for the stipulations of adults, which do not take into consideration their special needs (Withcomb, 1992). Their exposure to the particularly dangerous mechanisms of the Criminal Justice System (expert reports, preliminary proceedings, inquisition, hearing etc.) is responsible for the hiding of their abuse as well as their victimization (Runyan et al., 1998; Tedesco & Schnell, 1987).

The corner-stone of every effective and substantial effort to approach the children victims of sexual abuse is to maintain a code of ethics and to adopt guidelines aiming at the protection of the rights of the children from the suffering caused by their participation in agonizing for their age procedures.

All protocols regarding forensic interviews with children abuse victims refer to the planning and the objective of the interview, the role and the special skills of the interviewer, the basic principles and rules that must be applied during an interview, its phases and the several applicable techniques.

Among others, the value of the basic principles of rapport building and supportive environment formation between the child and the professional, the determination of cooperation rules, the conduct of the interview in a specially shaped, safe and child friendly space, the evaluation of the developmental stage of the child interviewed, the avoidance of repeated interviews by different professionals are particularly stressed.

Furthermore, it is important to choose the appropriate technique considering the developmental stage of the child and the training of the professional, the appropriate way of posing questions (avoiding leading and misleading questions and repetition of questions that have already been answered), the encouragement of free narrative, the avoidance of techniques that slip information into the memory resulting in its distortion, the avoidance of multiple and long-lasting interviews, the need for objectivity and flexibility on behalf of the interviewer, the comprehensive investigation of the allegations concerning the sexual violation and the avoidance of drawing conclusions on the basis of one sole technique.

The ultimate purpose is to protect childhood from the risk of secondary victimization, to find the actual truth and to administer justice in the right way.

Funding

The authors have no funding to report.

Competing Interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

Acknowledgments

The authors have no support to report.

References

- American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC). (2002). *Practice guidelines: Investigative interviewing in cases of alleged child abuse*. Elmhurst, IL: Author.
- Arata, C. M. (1998). To tell or not to tell: Current functioning of child sexual abuse survivors who disclosed their victimization. *Child Maltreatment*, 3, 63-71. doi:[10.1177/1077559598003001006](https://doi.org/10.1177/1077559598003001006)
- Back, C., Gustafsson, A., Larsson, I., & Bertero, C. (2011). Managing the legal proceedings: An interpretative phenomenological analysis of sexually abused children's experience with the legal process. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 35, 50-57. doi:[10.1016/j.chiabu.2010.08.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2010.08.004)
- Banyard, V. L., Williams, L. M., & Siegel, J. A. (2001). The long-term mental health consequences of child sexual abuse: An exploratory study of the impact of multiple traumas in a sample of women. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 14, 697-715. doi:[10.1023/A:1013085904337](https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1013085904337)
- Battin, D. B., Ceci, S. J., & Lust, B. C. (2012). Do children really mean what they say? The forensic implications of preschoolers' linguistic referencing. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 33, 167-174. doi:[10.1016/j.appdev.2012.04.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2012.04.001)
- Berliner, L., & Conte, J. R. (1995). The effects of disclosure and intervention on sexually abused children. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 19, 371-384. doi:[10.1016/S0145-2134\(94\)00138-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0145-2134(94)00138-3)
- Brennan, M. (1995). The discourse of denial: Cross-examining child victim witnesses. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 23, 71-91. doi:[10.1016/0378-2166\(94\)00032-A](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(94)00032-A)
- Brennan, M., & Brennan, R. E. (1988). *Strange language: Child victims under cross examination*. Wagga Wagga, Australia: CSU Literacy Studies Network.
- Brilleslijper-Kater, S. N., Friedrich, W. N., & Corwin, D. L. (2004). Sexual knowledge and emotional reaction as indicators of sexual abuse in young children: Theory and research challenges. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 28, 1007-1017. doi:[10.1016/j.chiabu.2004.06.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2004.06.005)
- Bruck, M., & Ceci, S. J. (1995). Amicus brief for the case of New Jersey v. Michaels presented by Committee of Concerned Social Scientists. *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 1, 272-322. doi:[10.1037/1076-8971.1.2.272](https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8971.1.2.272)
- Bruck, M., Melnyk, L., & Ceci, S. J. (2000). Draw it again Sam: The effect of drawing on children's suggestibility and source monitoring ability. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 77, 169-196. doi:[10.1006/jecp.1999.2560](https://doi.org/10.1006/jecp.1999.2560)
- Bull, R. (2010). The investigative interviewing of children and other vulnerable witnesses: Psychological research and working/professional practice. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 15, 5-23. doi:[10.1348/014466509X440160](https://doi.org/10.1348/014466509X440160)
- Bussey, K., & Grimbeek, E. J. (1995). Disclosure processes: Issues for child sexual abuse victims. In K. J. Rotenberg (Ed.), *Disclosure processes in children and adolescents* (pp. 166-203). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Carter, C. A., Bottoms, B. L., & Levine, M. (1996). Linguistic and socioemotional influences on the accuracy of children's reports. *Law and Human Behavior*, 20, 335-358. doi:[10.1007/BF01499027](https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01499027)
- Ceci, S. J., Bronfenbrenner, U., & Baker, J. G. (1988). Memory in context: The case of prospective remembering. In F. E. Weinert, & M. Perlmutter (Eds.), *Memory development: Universal changes and individual differences* (pp. 243-256). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- Ceci, S. J., & Bruck, M. (1993). Suggestibility of the child witness: A historical review and synthesis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 113, 403-439. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.113.3.403
- Ceci, S. J., & Bruck, M. (1995). *Jeopardy in the courtroom: A scientific analysis of children's memory*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Ceci, S. J., & Leichtman, M. (1992). Group distortion effects in preschoolers' reports. In D. Peters (Chair), *Issues related to the witness child*. Symposium presented at the American Psychology and Law Biennial Meeting, San Diego, CA.
- Child Witness Project. (1995). *Tipping the balance to tell the secret: The public discovery of child sexual abuse*. London, England: Family Court Clinic.
- Clifford, B. R. (1993). Witnessing: A comparison of adults and children. *Issues in Criminological and Legal Psychology*, 20, 15-21.
- Cronch, L. E., Viljoen, J. L., & Hansen, D. J. (2006). Forensic interviewing in child sexual abuse cases: Current techniques and future directions. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 11, 195-207. doi:10.1016/j.avb.2005.07.009
- Davies, G. M., & Noon, E. (1991). *An evaluation of the live link for child witnesses*. London, England: Home Office.
- Davies, G. M., & Westcott, H. L. (1999). *Interviewing child witnesses under the memorandum of good practice: A research review* (Police Research Series, Paper 115). Retrieved from Policing and Reducing Crime Unit website: <http://library.npia.police.uk/docs/hopolicers/fprs115.pdf>
- 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 & Law*, 6, 81-97. doi:10.1080/10683160008410834
- DeVoe, E. R., & Faller, K. C. (1999). The characteristics of disclosure among children who may have been sexually abused. *Child Maltreatment*, 4, 217-227. doi:10.1177/1077559599004003003
- DiPietro, E. K., Runynan, D. K., & Fredrickson, D. D. (1997). Predictors of disclosure during medical evaluation for suspected sexual abuse. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 6, 133-142. doi:10.1300/J070v06n01_09
- Dunn, S. (2006). *Interviewing pre-school age victims of sexual abuse: Interviewing methods and disclosure outcomes* (Master's thesis, Psychology Theses Series, Paper 13). Retrieved from http://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1012&context=psych_theses
- Edleson, J. L. (1999). The overlap between child maltreatment and woman battering. *Violence Against Women*, 5, 134-154. doi:10.1177/107780129952003
- Faller, K. C. (2003). *Understanding and assessing child sexual maltreatment* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Faller, K. C. (2007). Questioning techniques. In K. C. Faller (Ed.), *Interviewing children about sexual abuse: Controversies and best practice* (pp. 90-109). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Feltis, B. B., Powell, M. B., Snow, P. C., & Hughes-Scholes, C. H. (2010). An examination of the association between interviewer question type and story-grammar detail in child witness interviews about abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34, 407-413. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2009.09.019

- Finkelhor, D., Hotaling, G., Lewis, I., & Smith, C. (1990). Sexual abuse in a national survey of adult men and women: Prevalence, characteristics, and risk factors. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 14, 19-28. doi:10.1016/0145-2134(90)90077-7
- Fivush, R. (1997). Event memory in early childhood: Studies in developmental psychology. In C. Nelson (Ed.), *The development of memory in childhood* (pp. 139-161). Hove, England: Psychology Press.
- Furniss, T. (1991). *The multi-professional handbook of child sexual abuse: Integrated management, therapy, and legal intervention*. London, England: Routledge.
- Futa, K. T., Hsu, E., & Hansen, D. J. (2001). Child sexual abuse in Asian American families: An examination of cultural factors that influence prevalence, identification, and treatment. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 8, 189-209. doi:10.1093/clipsy.8.2.189
- Goodman, G. S., Bottoms, B. L., Schwartz-Kennedy, B., & Rudy, L. (1991). Children's testimony for a stressful event: Improving children's reports. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 1, 69-99.
- Gomes-Schwartz, B., Horowitz, J. M., & Cardarelli, A. P. (1990). *Child sexual abuse: The initial effects*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Graham-Bermann, S. A. (2001). Designing intervention evaluations for children exposed to domestic violence. In S. A. Graham-Bermann & J. L. Edleson (Ed.), *Domestic violence in the lives of children of children: The future of research, intervention and social policy* (pp. 237-267). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Harborview Center for Sexual Assault & Traumatic Stress, WA State Criminal Justice Training Commission in cooperation with the WA State Department of Social and Health Services (2007). *Washington state child interview guide* (Rev. 9/07). Seattle, WA: Author.
- Hewitt, S. K., & Arrowood, A. A. (1994). Systematic touch exploration as a screening procedure for child abuse: A pilot study. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 3(2), 31-44. doi:10.1300/J070v03n02_03
- Home Office. (2011, March). *Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings: Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures*. Retrieved from http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/docs/best_evidence_in_criminal_proceedings.pdf
- Katz, C., & Hamama, L. (2013). "Draw me everything that happened to you": Exploring children's drawings of sexual abuse. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 35, 877-882. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.02.007
- Kelley, S. J., Brand, R., & Waterman, J. (1993). Sexual abuse of children in day care centers. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 17, 71-89. doi:10.1016/0145-2134(93)90010-3
- Koverola, C., & Foy, D. (1994). Post-traumatic stress disorder symptomatology in sexually abused children: Implications for legal proceedings. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 2, 119-128. doi:10.1300/J070v02n04_12
- Krähenbühl, S., & Blades, M. (2006). The effect of question repetition within interviews on young children's eyewitness recall. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 94, 57-67. doi:10.1016/j.jecp.2005.12.002
- Kuehnle, K. (1996). *Assessing allegations of child sexual abuse*. Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Exchange.
- Lamb, S., & Edgar-Smith, S. (1994). Aspects of disclosure: Mediators of outcome of childhood sexual abuse. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 9, 307-326. doi:10.1177/088626094009003002

- Lamb, M. E., & Garretson, M. E. (2003). The effects of interviewer gender and child gender on the informativeness of alleged child sexual abuse victims in forensic interviews. *Law and Human Behavior*, 27(2), 157-171. doi:[10.1023/A:1022595129689](https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022595129689)
- Lamb, M. E., Orbach, Y., Sternberg, K. J., Aldridge, J., Pearson, S., Steward, H. L., . . . Bowler, L. (2009). Use of a structured investigative protocol enhances the quality of investigative interviews with alleged victims of child sexual abuse in Britain. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 23, 449-467. doi:[10.1002/acp.1489](https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.1489)
- Lamb, M. E., Orbach, Y., Sternberg, K. J., Espilin, P. W., & Hershkowitz, I. (2002). The effects of forensic practices on the quality of information provided by alleged victims of child abuse. In H. L. Westcott, G. M. Davies, & R. Bull (Eds.), *Children's testimony: A handbook of psychological research and forensic practice* (pp. 131-145). Chichester, England: Wiley.
- Lamb, M. E., & Sternberg, K. J. (1999, March). *Eliciting accurate investigative statements from children*. Presentation given at the 15th National Symposium on Child Sexual Abuse, Huntsville, AL.
- Lawson, L., & Chaffin, M. (1992). False negatives in sexual abuse disclosure interviews: Incidence and influence of caretaker's belief in abuse in cases of accidental abuse discovery by diagnosis of STD. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 7, 532-542. doi:[10.1177/088626092007004008](https://doi.org/10.1177/088626092007004008)
- Loftus, E. E. (1979). *Eyewitness testimony*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- London, K., Bruck, M., Ceci, S. J., & Shuman, D. W. (2005). Disclosure of child sexual abuse: What does the research tell us about the ways that children tell? *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law*, 11(1), 194-226. doi:[10.1037/1076-8971.11.1.194](https://doi.org/10.1037/1076-8971.11.1.194)
- Marche, T. A. (1999). Memory strength affects reporting of misinformation. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 73, 45-71. doi:[10.1006/jecp.1998.2489](https://doi.org/10.1006/jecp.1998.2489)
- Melton, G. B., & Thompson, R. (1987). Getting out of a rut: Detours to less travelled paths in child-witness research. In S. J. Ceci, M. P. Toglia, & D. F. Ross (Eds.), *Children's eyewitness memory* (pp. 209-229). New York, NY: Springer.
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (1999). *NICHD forensic interview protocol*. Available from Michael Lamb, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, P.O Box 3006, Rockville, MD 20847.
- Northern Ireland Office. (1999). *Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings (Northern Ireland): Guidance for vulnerable or intimidated witnesses, including children*. Belfast, Northern Ireland: Author.
- Paine, M. L., & Hansen, D. (2002). Factors influencing children to self-disclose sexual abuse. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 22, 271-295. doi:[10.1016/S0272-7358\(01\)00091-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0272-7358(01)00091-5)
- Palmer, S. E., Brown, R. A., Rae-Grant, N. I., & Loughlin, M. J. (1999). Responding to children's disclosure of familial abuse: What survivors tell us. *Child Welfare*, 78, 259-282.
- Patterson, T., & Pipe, M. (2009). Exploratory assessments of child abuse: Children's responses to interviewer's questions across multiple interview sessions. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 33, 490-504. doi:[10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.12.012](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.12.012)
- Pezdek, K., & Hodge, D. (1999). Planting false childhood memories in children: The role of event plausibility. *Child Development*, 70, 887-895. doi:[10.1111/1467-8624.00064](https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8624.00064)
- Phillips, E., Oxburgh, G. E., Gavin, A., & Myklebust, T. (2012). Investigative interviews with victims of child sexual abuse: The relationship between question type and investigation relevant information. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 27(1), 45-54. doi:[10.1007/s11896-011-9093-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-011-9093-z)

- Pipe, M. E., Lamb, M. E., Orbach, Y., & Esplin, P. W. (2004). Recent research on children's testimony about experienced and witnessed events. *Developmental Review, 24*, 440-468. doi:[10.1016/j.dr.2004.08.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dr.2004.08.006)
- Poole, D. A., & Lamb, M. (1998). *Investigative interviews of children: A guide for helping professionals*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Powell, M. B., Fisher, R. P., & Hughes-Scholes, C. H. (2008). The effect of using trained versus untrained adult respondents in simulated practice interviews about child abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 32*, 1007-1016. doi:[10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.05.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.05.005)
- Raskin, D. C., & Esplin, P. W. (1991). Statement validity assessment: Interview procedures and content analysis of children's statements of sexual abuse. *Behavioral Assessment, 13*(30), 265-291.
- Roberts, K. P., & Powell, M. B. (2001). Describing individual incidents of sexual abuse: A review on the effects of multiple sources of information on children's reports. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 25*, 1643-1659. doi:[10.1016/S0145-2134\(01\)00290-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0145-2134(01)00290-3)
- Rossman, B. B. (1998). Descarte's error and post-traumatic stress disorder. In G. W. Holder, R. Geffner, & E. N. Jouriles (Eds.), *Children exposed to marital violence* (pp. 223-256). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Runyan, D. K., Hunter, W. M., Socolar, R. R. S., Amaya-Jackson, L., English, D., Landsverk, J., . . . Mathew, R. M. (1998). Children who prosper in unfavorable environments: The relationship to social capital. *Pediatrics, 101*, 12-18. doi:[10.1542/peds.101.1.12](https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.101.1.12)
- Sas, L. D., Hurley, P., Hatch, A., Malla, S., & Dick, T. (1993). *Three years after the verdict: A longitudinal study of the social and psychological adjustment of child witnesses referred to the Child Witness Project*. London, Canada: Child Witness Project, London Family Court Clinic Inc.
- Sattler, J. M. (1998). *Clinical and forensic interviewing of children and families*. San Diego, CA: Author.
- Sauzier, M. (1989). Disclosure of child sexual abuse: For better or for worse. *The Psychiatric Clinics of North America, 12*, 455-469.
- Sayfan, L., Mitchell, E., Goodman, G., Eisen, M., & Quin, J. (2008). Children's expressed emotions when disclosing maltreatment. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 32*, 1026-1036. doi:[10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.03.004](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2008.03.004)
- Saywitz, K. J. (1995). Improving children's testimony: The question, the answer, and the environment. In M. S. Zaragoza, J. R. Graham, G. C. N. Hall, R. Hirschman, & Y. S. Ben-Porath (Eds.), *Memory and testimony in the child witness* (pp. 113-140). Newberry Park, CA: Sage.
- Saywitz, K. J., & Camparo, L. (1998). Interviewing child witnesses: A developmental perspective. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 22*(8), 825-843. doi:[10.1016/S0145-2134\(98\)00054-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0145-2134(98)00054-4)
- Saywitz, K. J., Geiselman, R. E., & Bornstein, G. K. (1992). Effects of cognitive interviewing and practice on children's recall performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 77*, 744-756. doi:[10.1037/0021-9010.77.5.744](https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.77.5.744)
- Saywitz, K. J., & Nathanson, R. (1993). Children's testimony and their perceptions of stress in and out of the courtroom. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 17*, 613-622. doi:[10.1016/0145-2134\(93\)90083-H](https://doi.org/10.1016/0145-2134(93)90083-H)
- Saywitz, K. J., & Snyder, L. (1993). Improving children's testimony with preparation. In G. Goodman & B. Bottoms (Eds.), *Child victims, child witnesses: Understanding and improving testimony* (pp. 117-146). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

- Schaeffer, P., Leventhal, J. M., & Asnes, A. G. (2011). Children's disclosures of sexual abuse: Learning from direct inquiry. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 35, 343-352. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2011.01.014
- Scottish Executive, St Andrew's House. (2003). *Guidance on interviewing child witnesses in Scotland: Supporting child witnesses guidance pack*. Retrieved from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/47176/0025087.pdf>
- Silvern, L., Karyl, J., Waelde, L., Hodges, W. F., Starek, J., Heidt, E., & Min, K. (1995). Retrospective reports of parental partner abuse: Relationships to depression, trauma symptoms and self-esteem among college students. *Journal of Family Violence*, 10, 177-202. doi:10.1007/BF02110599
- Smith, D. W., Letourneau, E. J., Saunders, B. E., Kilpatrick, H. S., Resnick, H. S., & Best, C. L. (2000). Delay in disclosure of childhood rape: Results from a national survey. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 24(2), 273-287. doi:10.1016/S0145-2134(99)00130-1
- State of Michigan. (2005, April). *Forensic interview protocol* (DHS Publ. No. 779, Rev.). Lansing, MI: Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice and then Michigan Department of Human Sciences.
- Steward, M. S., & Steward, D. S. (1996). Interviewing young children about body touch and handling. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Development*, 61(4/5, Serial No. 248).
- Summit, R. C. (1983). The sexual abuse accommodation syndrome. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 7, 177-193. doi:10.1016/0145-2134(83)90070-4
- Tedesco, J. F., & Schnell, S. V. (1987). Children's reactions to sex abuse investigation and litigation. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 11, 267-272. doi:10.1016/0145-2134(87)90066-4
- Tyler, K. A. (2002). Social and emotional outcomes of childhood sexual abuse: A review of recent research. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 7, 567-589. doi:10.1016/S1359-1789(01)00047-7
- Williams, M. D., & Hollan, J. D. (1981). The process of retrieval from very long-term memory. *Cognitive Science*, 5, 87-119. doi:10.1207/s15516709cog0502_1
- Withcomb, D. (1992). *Techniques for improving children's testimony* (Research Brief). Newton, MA: Education Department Center.
- Wood, J. M., & Garven, S. (2000). How sexual abuse interviews go astray: Implications for prosecutors, police, and child protection services. *Child Maltreatment*, 5, 109-118. doi:10.1177/1077559500005002003
- Wyatt, W. J. (1999). Assessment of child sexual abuse: Research and proposal for a bias-free interview: Part II. *Forensic Examiner*, 8(7-8), 24-27.