Chapter 11
Planning the Forensic Interview

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Imagine a criminal sexual conduct case that was brought to the attention of authorities when a mother found sexually explicit photographs of her 7-year-old son. Upon questioning by his mother, the boy said his biological father had taken the photos. The boy's mother and stepfather immediately contacted the police. In a single video-recorded interview session, the boy was forthcoming in providing detailed accounts of severe and repeated physical and sexual maltreatment by his biological father that took course over the past 2 years. The boy denied sexual touching by anyone outside of his biological father. Given the nature of the suspected abuse, a medical examination was performed. A physician assistant concluded signs of anal trauma were present. The biological father confessed to the abuse. He was arrested and eventually found guilty, and there was no further contact between the boy and his biological father. All of these details provide an extremely strong case that abuse truly did take place.

However, imagine further that the boy was seen for a follow-up medical exam 3 months after the arrest of his father. The physician assistant opined that the boy's anus still showed signs of trauma and surely such trauma would have healed over the past 3 months. He concluded the boy must have suffered additional and more recent sexual trauma. The physician assistant forwarded his opinion along to detectives. Detectives interviewed the boy, honing in on the boy's stepfather (since he was the only other male who had consistent contact with the boy). During an initial

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unrecorded interview with the boy at his school, he repeatedly denied maltreatment by anyone besides his biological father. Two days after the school interview, detectives picked up the boy from school and brought him to the police department. They interviewed him from about 3:30 to 6:30 in an unrecorded session without breaks or any food or drinks. Little is known about the 3 h of unrecorded interviewing, though the detectives did note the boy repeatedly denied abuse by his stepfather. After 3 h of nonstop interviewing, the child relayed a story that was similar to the earlier substantiated report involving his biological father. After the boy began to make allegations, the detectives brought him to an interview room where the interview was conducted again "for the purposes of video recording." At that time, the boy made allegations of sexual abuse against his stepfather. He claimed that his stepfather began abusing him during the investigation against his biological father.

In the recorded interview, the detectives used many forced-choice questions and selectively reinforced incriminating statements the boy made about his stepfather. When the boy said he could not remember, the detectives suggested details, telling him it was a scary thing to talk about and maybe he buried some of the memories. At trial, the boy retracted his allegations against his stepfather. However, an expert testified for the prosecution, saying prior abuse makes the boy more susceptible to later abuse and that such patterns of denial and recantation are seen in *all* sexually abused children. Combined with the medical evidence proffered by the physician assistant (later shown to be without foundation), the jury yielded a guilty verdict. Twenty years later, the stepfather is still in prison. The boy (now a man) maintains his biological father truly abused him, but his stepfather never did. He says he felt forced to make accusations against his stepfather because he was tired, hungry, and scared. He claims the detectives kept questioning him and he had no choice but to make allegations against his stepfather. He says he has been wracked by guilt over his stepfather's imprisonment.

Most readers probably agree that the criminal case against the biological father is much stronger than the case against the stepfather. The same medical and law enforcement team investigated both cases, yet the circumstances of the investigations greatly differ. In the first case against the biological father, the investigation appeared to be conducted in a sound and unbiased manner. However, in the second case, the unfolding of the investigation largely was influenced by the misguided belief that physical signs indicated a more recent sexualtrauma. The investigative team prepared for both cases in drastically different fashions. This variation in preparation for the interview could be costly. In this chapter, we discuss best practice guidelines for forensic interview preparation.

The overarching goal of a forensic interview is one of seeking the truth. Although forensic interviewers often are considered part of the "prosecution team" the goal is to uncover whether abuse did or did not occur and, if it did, by whom and how. The goal is not one of increasing *all* prosecutions, but rather increasing *valid* prosecutions. Interview preparation is a crucial part of the forensic evaluation process and should not be overlooked.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. In the first section, we address the issue of interviewer bias and whether interviewers should gather child and

case-specific knowledge versus conducting "blind" interviews. In the second section, we discuss the importance of taking a hypothesis-testing approach to forensic interviews. In the third section, we provide specific recommendations for preparing for the interview, including the importance of video recording and what type of case information to gather before the interview. In the conclusion, we return to evaluate the above case in light of the recommendations and the scientific evidence pertaining to interview preparation.

Currently, there is disagreement among researchers and professionals concerning the scope of information the interviewer should gather before conducting the forensic interview. More research is needed to clearly understand the potential costs and benefits that preinterview knowledge exerts on the reliability of children's forensic reports. Research findings regarding interviewer bias are reviewed next as a means to understand the potential harm that inaccurate preinterview knowledge can inflict on the investigation.

Interviewer Bias and Expectancy Effects Can Negatively Shape Investigation Outcomes

Interviewer bias occurs when the interviewer formulates questions in a manner to gather information consistent with their prior beliefs. Biased interviewers tend to disregard contradictory evidence the child provides. For example, if the interviewer holds the belief that a nondisclosing child is simply too frightened to disclose, then the child's repeated denials of abuse may be interpreted as reluctance that must be overcome. The interviewer may proceed in order to "help the child" reveal the abuse that the interviewer is convinced must have occurred. Unfortunately, if the interviewer's intuition or beliefs were incorrect, then the child's reports become tainted. The biased interviewer can have benevolent intentions yet inadvertently elicit false reports from the child. A biased interviewer can be anyone who questions the child, from formal interviewers (e.g., police, social workers, therapists, physicians, representatives from the Department of Health) to people who interview children in an informal setting such as concerned parents, siblings, or teachers.

Laboratory studies have found that interviewers can shape children's reports to coincide with the interviewers' beliefs (for reviews, see Bruck & Ceci, 2004; Ceci, Bruck, & Battin, 2000). For example, in Thompson, Clarke-Stewart, and Lepore (1997), 5- and 6-year-old children interacted with a confederate, purportedly a janitor, as he handled some toys in a playroom. Half of the children saw the janitor play with the dolls, and half of the children saw the janitor clean the dolls. When questioned by a neutral interviewer, or by an interviewer whose interpretation was consistent with the activity, children were very accurate in their event reports. However, when the interviewer was biased in a direction that contradicted the activity viewed by the child, those children's stories quickly conformed to the suggestions or beliefs of the interviewer. In addition, children's answers to interpretive questions

(e.g., "Was he doing his job or just being bad?") were in agreement with the interviewer's point of view, as opposed to what actually happened.

Principe and colleagues have demonstrated that interviewer bias can exert deleterious effects in an informal context via family members (see Principe & Schindewolf, 2012, for a review). For example, mothers in Principe, DiPuppo, and Gammel (2013) either were not given information (i.e., neutral) or were provided with false information (i.e., mislead) regarding a failed trick that occurred during a staged magic event with their children. All mothers were instructed to question their child a week after the magic show. Children interviewed by misled mothers provided significantly more inaccurate information about the magic show compared to children interviewed by neutral mothers. Furthermore, the amount of accurate information provided during the mother–child interview regarding the event was correlated to the amount of accurate information the child provided during a second neutral interview ($r = .42$). These results indicate that mothers' prior knowledge of an event (particularly when this information is inaccurate) can influence the child's report of the previous event while reminiscing with their mother and also when interviewed later by a neutral interviewer (also see Goodman, Sharma, Thomas, & Considine, 1995; Poole & Lindsay, 2001, 2002).

Bruck, Ceci, Melnyk, and Finkelberg (1999a, 1999b) documented how interviewer bias can develop in natural situations. In this study, an event was staged for 90 preschool children. In one condition, children experienced a "surprise birthday party" (with games, food, and magic tricks) for one of the research assistants. In the other condition, children were informed it was one of the research assistant's birthday, but they simply colored pictures with the research assistants.

Interviewers were recruited from graduate programs in counseling and social work and had experience with interviewing children. Interviewers were asked to question four children about what happened when the visitors came to their school. The interviewers were not told about the events but were simply told to find out from each child what had happened. The first three children that each interviewer questioned attended the birthday party and the fourth child attended the coloring event. Immediately after the interview with the fourth child, the interviewers were asked to report what they learned from all four children. Several weeks later, the interviewers were again questioned about what they had learned from the children.

Bruck and her colleagues (1999a, 1999b) found that the fourth children interviewed (those that attended the coloring event) produced twice as many errors as the children who attended the birthday party. The majority of the children (60 %) who only colored made false claims that involved a birthday party. This result suggests that the interviewers had built up a bias that all the children had attended a birthday party. By the time they interviewed the fourth child, the interviewers structured their interviews in such a way as to elicit claims consistent with their hypothesis. Another important finding was that when the fourth child denied attending a birthday party, 84 % of their interviewers later reported that all the children they interviewed had attended a birthday party. These data suggest that, regardless of what children actually say, biased interviewers inaccurately interpret the child's claims, making them consistent with their own beliefs.

Additionally, police officers are not immune to the downfalls of interviewer bias. Powell, Hughes-Scholes, and Sharman (2012) examined the effect of preinterview knowledge on police officers' questioning of children about a staged event. The police officers had extensive training on the importance of employing a nonsuggestive questioning style while interviewingchildwitnesses. Police officers were designated as either *good* or *poor* interviewers based on their usage of open-ended and nonleading questions in an independent hypothetical interviewing scenario. Additionally, interviewers were either blind to the "allegation" (i.e., the staged event) or were given accurate and inaccurate information regarding the staged event before interviewing the children. Police officers interviewed children a week after the event. Powell et al. (2012) found that poor biased interviewers asked a lower proportion of open-ended questions and a higher proportion of yes/no questions compared to poor non-biased interviewers. However, preinterview knowledge did not significantly affect the performance of good interviewers. Unfortunately, Powell et al. (2012) did not discuss how interviewers' questioning affected the reliability of children's reports. While this study is a good start toward understanding the role of preinterview knowledge and interviewer bias, more work is needed.

In summary, interviewers' preconceived beliefs are not always accurate; this is the very reason a forensic interview must be conducted. If interviewers' preconceived intuitions were largely correct, then forensic interviews would not be necessary. Unfortunately, if an interviewer holds prior (and incorrect) beliefs regarding an event, then the interview may be structured in a way to extract confirmatory evidence from the child. During the interviewing process, children often conform to the interviewer's prior beliefs, even inaccurate depictions of what actually happened. Additionally, conflicting evidence provided by the child is often ignored. Interviewers tend to interpret children's reports consistent with their a priori beliefs, and information consistent with these beliefs seeps into their reports. While preparing for the interview, interviewers need to keep in mind the potential for interviewer bias when having prior knowledge of the child and/or allegations.

To be Blind or Not to be Blind: That is the Question

Given the robust and deleterious effects of interviewer bias, a question that begs to be asked is whether (and how much) interviewers should gather information before conducting the interview. In the United States, several states (Idaho, Arizona, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania) have instituted interviewing practices aimed to reduce preinterview knowledge in interviewing childwitnesses. Additionally, the Idaho v. Wright (1989) Supreme Court ruling suggested that allegation blind forensic interviewing could act as a legal safeguard for interviewing child witnesses. However, the Supreme Court did not provide specific practice recommendations. Blind interviewing is not the norm in forensic interviews with children, and most protocols recommend that interviewers gather information before conducting the

interview. However, in many areas of professional practice outside of child forensic interviews, blind assessment procedures are practiced.

Blind assessment procedures have been used as a staple in medical and social science research methodology for over 200 years. The rationale is that blind procedures are necessary to isolate data founded on the scientific truth rather than external influences (e.g., confirmation bias and expectancy effects) (Kaptchuck, 1998). Blind procedures originated in the late eighteenth century as a means to challenge the true effectiveness of unconventional medical and psychological treatments (e.g., mesmerism) aside from personal beliefs in therapy. Blind assessments became mainstream in the medical community by the mid-nineteenth century and grew in popularity among experimental psychologists in the late-nineteenth century. Today, blind assessments are a normative infrastructure in medical, psychological, neurological, and pharmacological research designs, with double-blind placebo-controlled studies being the gold standard in science (Kaptchuck, 1998).

A large body of work led by Rosenthal (e.g., Rosenthal, 1994; Rosenthal & Rubin, 1978) demonstrates that the experimenter's expectations prior to conducting the experiment result in participants demonstrating the expected behaviors. Experimenter expectancy effects are robust and have been replicated in various areas of research (e.g., learning, reaction time, judgment, perception) (Canter, Hammond, & Youngs, 2012). Blind research designs are employed in efforts to avoid contaminating the data with experimenters' expectations.

Professionals and researchers interested in best practice procedures for forensic investigations also have been concerned with experimenter expectancy effects. Much of this concern in the forensic arena has focused on eliminating expectancy effects while conducting lineups (e.g., Wells et al., 1998). Double-blind lineup procedures, in which the witness and investigator are blind to the suspects' location within the lineup, are considered the best practice safeguard for reducing any unintentional bias in the witness' selection (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2013). The double-blind lineup procedure is an empirically validated method for reducing expectancy effects and is endorsed by policy makers and the American Psychology and Law Society (Wells et al., 1998).

Additionally, forensic researchers have advocated for blind hypothesis testing while processing evidence from a crime scene (see Kassin, Dror, & Kukucka, 2013, for a review). Blind testing is common in matching shoe prints, firearms, bloodstains, handwriting, teeth marks, and fingerprints. Myriad procedures for processing forensic evidence do not have systematic and objective *yes or no* tests, but rather rely on expert opinion in determining if the evidence from the crime scene matches evidence from a suspect (Dror & Cole, 2010). Research has shown that this area of the forensic investigation is not immune to experimenter bias. In fact, evidence-processing experts often provide contradictory conclusions when examining the same fingerprints when given external information versus no information (Dror & Cole, 2010).

While some forensic investigation tools have been empirically evaluated and adjusted for expectancy effects (e.g., lineups), one area in which expectancy effects are surprisingly underresearched is forensic interviewing. The potential for bias in

forensic interviewing could be especially problematic in cases involving childsexualabuse, as most cases lack physical indicators, and the child often is the only witness to the alleged abuse. In these cases, children's statements provide the central and possibly sole evidence. Bias produced by interviewers' prior knowledge might contaminate the reliability of statements made during the forensic interview.

To our knowledge, only one field study has evaluated the effect of preinterview knowledge on disclosure rates of childsexualabuse. In Cantlon, Payne, and Erbaugh (1996), interviewers were either blind to the allegation at the start of the interview or they had knowledge of the allegations prior to the interview. Though "allegation blind interviewers" were initially blind to the allegations, they were allowed to review case-specific information as the interview progressed. In this study, preinterview blind interviews resulted in a higher disclosure rate compared to interviews conducted by preinterview informed interviewers. Cantlon et al. (1996) posited that preinterview blind interviewers had to be patient with the child, which may have facilitated rapport and subsequent disclosures. While findings from Cantlon et al. (1996) shed some light on the issue of preinterview knowledge, there are limitations to their study such as a lack of random assignment and an unbalanced design ($n = 196$ preinterview informed interviews and $n = 1330$ preinterview blind interviews). Additionally, since Cantlon et al. (1996) was a field study, the veracity of the disclosures is unknown. As such, these findings need to be taken with caution.

Some researchers and practitioners hold that it is impractical for interviewers to be completely blind prior to conducting the interview. Child-specific knowledge is often necessary to create a developmentally appropriate interview according to the child's developmental trajectory (Poole & Lamb, 1998; Saywitz & Camparo, 1998). Information about the child's family composition, living arrangements, and caretaking schedule can be collected prior to the interview to aid in creating a comfortable interviewing environment for the child (Morgan, 1995; Poole & Lamb, 1998). Some professionals argue that prior knowledge of the child and the child's family environment creates a context for the interviewer to interpret the behaviors of child witness, especially for very young children (e.g., Hewitt, 1999). Many researchers and child protection professionals agree that child-specific knowledge is necessary to conduct a developmentally appropriate forensic interview (e.g., Anderson et al., 2010).

The more controversial debate regarding preinterview information spurs from the interviewer's prior knowledge of allegation-specific information. Some professionals argue allegation blind interviews are not conducive to eliciting a complete interview in which alternative hypotheses are explored and the necessary information to judge the validity of the allegation is obtained (e.g., Raskin & Esplin, 1991). Under this assumption, most child welfare researchers and professionals recommend the interviewer should gather knowledge regarding the events in question (Anderson et al., 2010; Great Britain Ministry of Justice, 2011; Hewitt, 1999; Morgan, 1995; Poole & Lamb, 1998; State of Michigan Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice and Department of Human Services, 2004) and any past reports of abuse (Hewitt, 1999; Morgan, 1995). Interviewers are advised to gather allegation-specific information by carefully reviewing police reports (Morgan, 1995), contacting child protective services (Poole & Lamb, 1998), and interviewing family members as well as the

adult who made the report (Morgan, 1995). Some professionals contend an understanding of the child's abuse history (Hewitt, 1999; Morgan, 1995), the current allegation (Hewitt, 1999; Morgan, 1995), and offender-specific information (Morgan, 1995) is particularly important to conducting a complete interview. In fact, Morgan (1995) states that collecting necessary background information prior to conducting the interview leads to a better interview compared to blind interviews as learning information about the child and allegations can assist the interviewer in planning and testing alternate hypotheses.

Forensic interviewers are in a difficult position. On one hand, confirmation bias and expectancy effects can unwittingly shape the architecture of the interview. On the other hand, some information about the child and allegations seems necessary for interviewers to focus their questioning and to develop alternative hypotheses. Until additional data establish the effectiveness of blind interview processes with children, we agree that gathering information about the child and the allegations is warranted. However, a wealth of scientific data highlights the dangers of having only one hypothesis about the event in question—especially when this hypothesis is incorrect. In the next section, we discuss the importance of alternative hypothesis testing during the forensic interview as a means of countering expectancy effects.

Minimizing Interviewer Bias and Expectancy Effects: Taking a Hypothesis-Testing Approach

Given the robust literature demonstrating interviewer bias and expectancy effects, great care must be taken to ensure the interviewer takes a hypothesis-testing versus a hypothesis-confirming approach. However, as just reviewed, the interviewers' prior beliefs can exert an influence without malice or intent on the part of the interviewer. Therefore, a crucial part of the interview is planning out alternative hypotheses.

A number of worldwide forensic interviewprotocols agree on the importance of adopting hypothesis-testing approach with childwitnesses. The State of Michigan protocol cites hypothesis testing as one of the central features of a sound evidence-based-->interview (State of Michigan Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice and Department of Human Services, 2004). Similarly, the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) guidelines caution interviewers to weigh alternative justifications for any allegations or inconsistencies in children's report (APSAC Task Force on Investigative Interviews in Cases of Alleged Child Abuse, 2002). The CornerHouse/RATAC protocol reminds interviewers that children are the experts in the interview setting and interviewers' assumptions regarding the child's experiences must be avoided (Anderson et al., 2010).

Exploring alternative hypothesis during the interview is crucial in attempting to combat interviewer bias. For specific information on developing alternative hypotheses, see State of Michigan Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice and Department of Human Services (2004) and Poole and Lamb (1998).

Unfortunately, little scientific evidence exists to date testing whether interviewers can control their preexisting beliefs when properly warned to do so. Lamb and colleagues have conducted extensive training with forensic interviewers regarding the importance of employing open-ended and nonleading questioning techniques (see Lamb, Hershkowitz, Orbach, & Esplin, 2008). Despite a great deal of training and despite the interviewers' intentions, they unwittingly dropped into leading and directive questioning techniques when they were simply provided with these guidelines. Importantly, interviewers tend to believe they are using best-practice questioning methods despite videotaped interview transcripts indicating otherwise. Guidelines generally are not enough to lessen interviewer bias. Several prominent interview protocols in the United States, however, do just that: the guidelines caution interviewers against using directive and suggestive questioning strategies but do not provide a structured protocol. Most likely, forensic interviewers adhere to the guidelines at varying levels according to their preexisting beliefs. If they believe children will be resistant and need to be *helped* (which may translate to children being pressured or even badgered), then their methods will deviate from best practice. One of the authors of this chapter (KL) has seen an unfortunate number of forensic interviews resembling coercive suspect interviews rather than developmentally sensitive child interviews. In one such case, a nationally prominent academic social worker violated almost every interview principle in *her own* forensic interview books.

So what can policy makers and practitioners do? Lamb and colleagues have conducted over two decades of developmental studies demonstrating interviewers can be trained to successfully follow best-practice interviewing protocols which can help reduce the effects of interviewer bias. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) protocol is a structured interviewing protocol that provides a flexible road map for the interviewer (see Lamb, Orbach, Hershkowtiz, Esplin, & Horowitz, 2007). While many interview "protocols" provide guidelines based on sound developmental research, the question of their actual effectiveness in the field has not been established. Decades of laboratory research and scientific collaboration among developmental researchers, childabuse professionals, and police served as the foundation of the NICHD protocol (Lamb, La Rooy, Malloy, & Katz, 2011). The NICHD protocol has been shown to increase the quality of both interviewers' questioning behavior (e.g., Lamb et al., 2008; Sternberg, Lamb, Orbach, Esplin, & Mitchell, 2001) and children's statements, even among preschoolers (Hershkowitz, Fisher, Lamb, & Horowitz, 2007). Due to the fact that the NICHD protocol has undergone rigorous testing worldwide (Bull, 2010; Lamb et al., 2008), we strongly recommend this protocol for interviewing children. Combined with alternative hypotheses developed in advance of the interview, the NICHD protocol (or others similar to it) provides the best means of countering expectancy effects that result from interviewer bias. In the next section, we turn our attention to practical considerations of planning the interview.

Planning the Interview: Practical Considerations

Contemporary forensic interview guidelines share common features for interview-preparation. Many of these factors deal with planning the actual interview, while others focus on information to be gained and arrangements to be made before the interview takes place. Here, we will focus on four basic areas of preparation: (1) video recording/documentation, (2) interview context, (3) information about the child, and (4) information about the alleged event.

Video Recording

Interviewers will need to determine how they are going to document the interview. Two primary reasons for documentation of the interview include (1) obtaining a detailed and objective record of the child's report, and (2) verifying the child was questioned in an appropriate manner. Most forensic interview guidelines recommend videotaping the interview (e.g., American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012; Anderson et al., 2010; Bottoms, Najdowski, & Goodman, 2009; Great Britain Ministry of Justice, 2011; Home, 2007; Lamb et al., 2008; Pence & Wilson, 1994; Poole & Lamb, 1998; Smith & Milne, 2011).

The rationale for videotaping forensic interviews with children parallels the logic behind video recording interviews with criminal suspects: fact finders and experts must be able to evaluate the extent to which the statements arose voluntarily or as the result of pressure from the interviewer. In the United States, as of February 2014, 19 states and Washington, DC now have recording laws for suspect interviews (http://www.reid.com/pdfs/20140331a.pdf). In 2013, President Obama issued a statement encouraging videotaping in all capital cases. In June 2014, Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole mandated that interviews with individuals detained in federal custody must be electronically recorded (Office of the Attorney General, 2014). Deputy Attorney Cole stated that electronic recording will ensure individuals' constitutional rights are protected and also will help federal investigating agencies (FBI, DEA, ATF, and US Marshals) show they employed proper techniques with a clear and indispensable record of important statements and confessions. The bottom-line rationale for electronically recording interviews, whether with suspects or child victims and witnesses, is that electronic records are necessary to provide veridical documentation of the interview procedures and individuals' statements. Certainly if adults can succumb to social pressure from investigators, then children as young as 3-years-old deserve similar protection during forensic interviews (see "Childhood Memory: An Update from the Cognitive Neuroscience Perspective", this volume). Very high stakes are involved in CSA cases, so it is imperative that proper investigative methods are followed.

Many interviewers opt to take notes during the interview as their form of documentation rather than video recording the interview. However, note taking is not an

adequate form of documentation of childforensic interviews for a number of reasons. First, note taking during the interview may disrupt the flow of conversation and may distract both the interviewer and the child. Second, the child and the interviewer's affect and nonverbal communication cannot be clearly documented in written notes. Third, notes reflect the gist of the interview, but do not fully capture the details necessary to assess whether the interview included suggestive features (for a review, see Bruck, Ceci, & Principe, 2006).

Major errors can be made in replicating the content and structure (what questions were asked, how many times, with what response from the interviewer, how the child's statements were elicited) of the conversation in handwritten records. Even highly trained and motivated interviewers perform quite poorly in recounting the verbatim questions and statements made during the interview, and rather tend to recall the gist. Lamb, Orbach, Sternberg, Hershowitz, and Horowitz (2000) compared audiotaped recordings of 20 forensic interviews to contemporaneous "verbatim" notes taken by highly trained interviewers. More than half of the interviewers' utterances and 25 % of the children's incident relevant details were not reported in the so-called verbatim notes. Less than half of the details provided by children were attributed to the correct eliciting question. Even when taking highly detailed notes during the interview, well-intentioned professionals leave out a great deal of information.

Information on the exact wording of each question asked of children during interviews, as well as the number of times questions are repeated and the tone of the questions, is necessary to evaluate the reliability of the children's allegations. Like with suspect interviews, experts and fact finders must be able to evaluate the extent to which statements were brought about by social pressure versus using scientifically supported interview techniques. The lack of such information from the initial interviews makes it impossible to make such a determination and therefore makes a reliability assessment untenable.

Some professionals have argued that videotaping is not necessary because the child will provide testimony at the trial, and the jurors can evaluate whether the child's statements were improperly influenced at that time. Once children have been suggestively interviewed, their later reports may continue to show the initial suggestive influence even when interviewed with open-ended neutral techniques (e.g., London, Bruck, & Melnyk, 2009). Unfortunately, laypeople and professionals cannot reliably distinguish between true and false reports based on the content of children's statements. One body of scientific work has shown that laypeople and professionals do poorly in distinguishing true versus false reports, whether the false reports stem from intentional deception (see Talwar & Crossman, 2012, for a review) or from suggestive interview techniques (Ceci, Huffman, Smith, & Loftus, 1994; Leichtman & Ceci, 1995).

In a second area of study, researchers have systematically compared children's true and false narratives. The general paradigm in these studies involves staging an event for children and later exposing children to some sources of false suggestions. Children's subsequent narratives are then coded for a number of characteristics including number of spontaneous utterances, details, contradictory statements,

narrative cohesion, and improbable details. Surprisingly, the results generally reveal that false narratives were actually more elaborate than children's true narratives (see Bruck, Ceci, & Hembrooke, 2002; Powell, Jones, & Campbell, 2003; Principe & Ceic, 2002). For example, Kulkofsky and Klemfuss (2008) found that increases in narrative quality were associated with decreases in accuracy. These two areas of research dispute the notion that jurors can separate unreliable from reliable testimony provided by the child witnesses during trial. In fact, this research provides increasing support that interviews should be videotaped.

Video recording the childforensic interview has additional benefits. By recording the interview, the investigationteam can help minimize the number of times the child is questioned (Pence & Wilson, 1994; Poole & Lamb, 1998). Furthermore, video recording allows interviewers to review their own interviewing skills and improve their techniques (Lamb et al., 2002; Pence & Wilson, 1994). Lamb and colleagues (2002) found that interviewers can be trained to follow the NICHD protocol, but this training involves a feedback process in which the interviewer watches their prior interviews as a means to improve upon their previous performance. This reviewing process is an integral component of training, and videotapes of prior interviews are necessary.

Taken together, these data provide an empirical basis for the importance of obtaining electronic copies of interviews with children. If the investigator has a bias that the child was sexually abused prior to the interview, confirmation bias could color his or her interpretations of what the child said or did; and it is this interpretation that appears in interviewer's notes rather than a factual account of what transpired. If a number of children are interviewed and the reports are not immediately written, then the investigator may confuse which child said what (Bruck et al., 1999a, 1999b). This literature highlights the problem with relying on reports of children's behaviors and statements that occurred in the past and that were not recorded at the time of their occurrence.

Interviewers and child protection agencies should be transparent about the investigative techniques they employ. Just like the evidence technician must show they employed proper techniques in finger print collection, investigators must show they employed proper techniques in interviewing children. If the interviewer fails to electronically record the interview, like a car wash, they wash away the evidence of what occurred to produce statements from the child. If interviewers generally employ proper techniques, then the videotape should provide excellent evidence that the interview was conducted in a sound manner that allows optimal assessment of the abuse suspicions.

When audio or visual recording equipment is used, it will be necessary to regulate who will have access to the records, how they will be stored, and how they will eventually be destroyed and by whom (Poole & Lamb, 1998). Some states require certain information is recorded at the onset of the recording such as the name of people in the room and the time and date of the interview. Video recording equipment can be small and very discreetly placed. Refer to requirements in your jurisdiction.

Interview Context

Location. Interviewers must decide where the interview is going to take place. A neutral location is ideal as it reduces any power the alleged offender may have over the child (Pence & Wilson, 1994). Child advocacy centers (CAC) are becoming increasingly more common hosts for child interviews and are the preferred location (State of Michigan Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice and Department of Human Services, 2004). These centers typically are already child appropriate and equipped with the necessary video recording equipment (Pence & Wilson, 1994; Poole & Lamb, 1998). Adjoining rooms where other adults can view the interview through a two-way mirror is recommended.

Child-friendly environment. The interview location must be private, child friendly, and free from distraction. Privacy is necessary in order to establish rapport and help the child feel safe in their environment (APSAC Task Force on Investigative Interviews in Cases of Alleged Child Abuse, 2002; Saywitz, Lyon, & Goodman, 2011). The interview room must be physically safe and childproof (Russell, 2004). Child-appropriate seating should be available which does not encourage roaming or bouncing around by the child (Anderson et al., 2010; Bohannan et al., 2004; Poole & Lamb, 1998; Russell, 2004; Saywitz & Camparo, 1998). A simple set of table and chairs (avoid swivel chairs) should suffice (Poole & Lamb, 1998). If the child has special needs, the interview room and location must be fully accessible to the child (Russell, 2004).

Interviewers should be sure the child is comfortable. Interviewers should avoid scheduling the interview during the child's naptime and ensure the child is not hungry or thirsty before initiating the interview. Ideally, bathroom facilities should be available to children directly from the interview room so children do not have to pass through the waiting area mid-interview.

In the past, forensic interviews frequently were conducted in private rooms at locations such as a public library or the child's school. Children are typically comfortable at their school, which may foster rapport building. If the interview is to take place at the child's school, interviewers must work to ensure that unnecessary attention will not be drawn to the child (Pence & Wilson, 1994). Additionally, extra care should be taken to remove all distractions such as toys and computers from the interview room at the child's school (Poole & Lamb, 1998).

Most formal forensic interview guidelines suggest that interview rooms are free of all toys and other distractions, including drawing materials, phone calls, or other possible interruptions (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012; Anderson et al., 2010; Bottoms et al., 2009; Lamb et al., 2008; Saywitz & Camparo, 1998). However, many professionals agree that a play area with neutral toys in a waiting room might be beneficial in helping children feel more at ease and helping interviewers to establish rapport prior to the interview (Poole & Lamb, 1998; Russell, 2004; Zwiers & Morrissette, 1999).

Interviewers sometimes allow children to continue playing with toys or to draw during substantive questioning. Sometimes the interviewer also draws or plays along with the child throughout the interview, oscillating between discussing the suspected abuse and the fantasy drawings. We discourage this practice as it distracts the child and disrupts the flow of the conversation when the discussion flops back and forth from the drawings to the event questions. Additionally, the play activity could be suggestible by encouraging pretend play.

Multidisciplinary teams. Interviewers should act as a part of a multidisciplinary team (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012; Russell, 2004). The team approach can help keep interview sessions to a minimum and help ensure complete questioning occurs during the first session.

Number of interviewers in the room. The investigationteam must decide who will be present during the interview. Most forensic interview guidelines recommend that a single person conducts the interview (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012; Anderson et al., 2010; Lamb et al., 2008; Saywitz & Camparo, 1998; Smith & Milne, 2011). Having more than one adult in the room may be intimidating to children, creating difficulties in rapport building or leading to an atmosphere that engenders children's compliance with the adults.

Ideally, other adults on the investigationteam can watch the interview through a one-way mirror. Additionally, many CAC centers are now set up where the forensic interviewer wears an earpiece so that observers on the investigation team can communicate with the interviewer. Alternatively, the interviewer can take a break toward the end of the interview and leave the room briefly to conference with the other investigation members. Multiple perspectives may be helpful in producing additional alternative hypotheses or interview questions. At the same time, the interviewer has to be careful the proposed questions do not introduce bias.

Support persons. Interviewers must also decide whether support persons will be allowed in the interview room (Saywitz et al., 2011). Support persons are not recommended as they may interfere with the interview by interrupting the conversation, prompting or distracting the child, or preventing the child from using sexually explicit language (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012; Poole & Lamb, 1998; State of Michigan Governor's Task Force on Children's Justice and Department of Human Services, 2004). We recommend that, if at all possible, support persons should not be allowed in the interview room. Support persons particularly should not be allowed in the room if one plausible hypothesis is that family members may be exerting influence upon the child. An interviewer can establish some rapport in the waiting area, which may help children who refuse to separate from their caregiver.

Timing and number of interviews. Interviews should be conducted as close in time to the alleged event as possible, taking both the child's mental and emotional state as well as their immediate safety into account (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012; Smith & Milne, 2011). Interviewing the child as soon

as suspicions arise may help to lessen the likelihood that other people in the child's life influence the child's report.

A single interview is recommended though this may not be possible due to child characteristics, particularly their routine, age, and medical, mental, or emotional condition (Smith & Milne, 2011). In some cases, more than one interview may be necessary (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012; Lamb et al., 2008). Much caution must be used if conducting more than one interview to avoid suggestive questions or queries about a specific topic involving a specific person. Researchers have found that repeatedly asking children if a nonexperienced event occurred produces elaborate free recall reports from some children (Leichtman & Ceci, 1995). Repeated interviews may promote additional information from children but do so at the expense of accuracy (Bruck et al., 1997; Peterson, Moores, & White, 2001; Pipe, Gee, Wilson, & Egerton, 1999; Salmon & Pipe, 2000). Furthermore, interviewers can implicitly convey interviewer bias if they continue to interview children who repeatedly deny abuse until an allegation is forthcoming. Much more research is needed to establish how repetitive interviewing could be conducted in order to promote additional details without compromising the accuracy of the details provided by children (see La Rooy, Katz, Malloy, & Lamb, 2010).

Use of props. Interviewers should start the interview with open-ended questions that do not rely on props or other types of symbols (Home Office in conjunction with Department of Health, 1992; Lamb et al., 2007; Lyon, 2005; Poole & Dickinson, 2011; Steward et al., 1996). Though some forensic interviewprotocols place a large emphasis on human-figure drawings (HFDs), the use of such drawings has not been empirically validated (for details, see Poole & Bruck, 2012; Poole & Dickinson, 2011). Open-ended prompts produce more substantive and complete reports even from young children (Lamb et al., 2007). The continued use of dolls and HFDs is a potentially dangerous practice (Lytle, London, & Bruck, 2015) and is inconsistent with past and current research examining children's understanding and use of such props.

Information About the Child

Developmental history. Basic information about the child (e.g., age, history of injury or illness, developmental milestones) may be helpful in planning the interview (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012; Great Britain Ministry of Justice, 2011; Saywitz & Camparo, 1998; Smith & Milne, 2011; Sternberg et al., 2001). This information can be obtained by working as part of a multidisciplinary team, particularly with family physicians, medical or mental health care providers, teachers, caretakers, detectives, and social workers.

Cultural sensitivity. Some interview protocols recommend the interview is adapted according to the child's cultural background and language (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012; Russell, 2004). The NICHD protocol has been shown to be effective with children across various countries (e.g., United States,

Canada, England, Scotland, Sweden, New Zealand, and Australia). The interviewer should be aware of any factors that could act as barriers in developing rapport and eliciting sensitive information (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012). Children should be interviewed in their first language (Smith & Milne, 2011). However, if this is not feasible or the child is deaf/hard of hearing, an extra familial interpreter may be necessary and should be arranged prior to the interview (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012; Smith & Milne, 2011).

Special needs. Consider and accommodate any special needs of the child prior to the interview, including physical and developmental disabilities (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012). The interview room should be accessible and the interviewer should be receptive to the child's needs. If developmental delays are present, it may be necessary to consult with guardians or other professionals working with the child in order to determine the child's developmental level (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012). As with any population, children with special needs should be encouraged to make reports in their own words. If a child has severely limited language abilities due to a developmental disorder, the interviewer needs to be careful not to resort to a barrage of forced-choice questions. Just like typical populations, such directive and suggestive questions run an increased risk of eliciting erroneous information (see London, Henry, Conradt, & Corser, 2010, for a review). Further work is needed on a variety of special populations such as children with atypical development of varying etiologies, suspected victims of familial abuse, and suspected victims of the commercial sex trade industry.

Developmentally appropriate language. Some forensic interviewprotocols recommend that the adults' language should be tailored to the child's developmental level (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012). Vocabulary, sentence structure, and complexity should be continually assessed throughout the interview and adapted where appropriate (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012). Rapport building that comes before the substantive portion of the interview is an ideal time to assess the child's linguistic abilities. The interviewer should also be careful to use kinship and anatomical terms with which the child is familiar (American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children, 2012). One of the advantages of the NICHD protocol is that it has been extensively tested (both in field studies and in laboratory studies) and shown to produce reliable reports even from children as young as age four (Lamb et al., 2008). The NICHD protocol leaves less to subjective judgment on what language is appropriate for children at different ages by providing a semistructured protocol.

Information About the Alleged Event

Information about the alleged event and history of the allegations can be informative in guiding the questioning, particularly in the formation of alternative hypotheses (Poole & Lamb, 1998; State of Michigan Governor's Task Force on Children's

Justice and Department of Human Services, 2004). Obtaining information about the allegations may be particularly important in cases involving divorce and custody disputes so that such information can be used with generating alternative hypotheses about the provenance of the allegations. Information needed in order to set clear goals for the interview may include:

- The nature of the alleged event
- Timing, duration, and location of the alleged event
- How the child came to be interviewed
- Any threats or psychological factors used to intimidate the child
- The child's relationship to the suspected perpetrator
- Any history of abuse
- The alleged victim's usual routine

Conclusions

At the beginning of this chapter, we outlined a scenario where a 7-year-old boy made allegations of abuse against his biological father and later against his stepfather. In the first scenario, the boy was forthcoming about the abuse perpetrated by his biological father. In the second case, the boy was questioned due to a physician assistant's medical opinion that was without scientific foundation. This belief propelled law enforcement to continue to interview the boy despite his repeated denials.

In the first case involving his biological father, the boy had not come forward to make allegations. The abuse was discovered when the mother and the stepfather found a sexually explicit photograph of the child. When questioned briefly by police at his residence on the day of the photo's discovery, the boy relayed details about abuse by his biological father. The boy was interviewed the next day in a single video-recorded session. He gave detailed reports about severe physical and sexual abuse by his biological father that had taken place over the past 2 years. The boy's reports were consistent with the medical evidence and the photograph. The biological father was found guilty and remains imprisoned.

In the second case, the same investigationteam employed very different tactics. Driven by their misguided belief that the medical evidence proved the boy had been abused more recently than by his biological father, two detectives repeatedly interviewed the boy in hours of unrecorded sessions. The detectives do not appear to have approached the case with a plan, but rather continued to interview the boy until he gave statements consistent with their belief that the stepfather had abused him. No discernable interview protocol was followed. When the boy denied abuse or said he could not remember, the detectives told the boy he probably blocked out the memories due to trauma. In all likelihood, the detectives had the boy's best interest in mind: due to the faulty medical opinion, they believed the boy had been abused by the stepfather and conducted their investigation to extract abuse-consistent information.

The danger that interviewers face when repeatedly interviewing a child who denies abuse is that suggestive methods may produce allegations. Of course, if the

interviewer's initial intuition or the reporting parent's concerns of abuse were valid, then the report may be predominately accurate. However, if intuition were enough, we would not need forensic interviews. Instead, we would allow the forensic interviewer to make decisions according to their intuition. Unfortunately, some interviewers do continue to operate in this fashion, where they develop a belief prior to the interview and continue to conduct the (often unrecorded) interview until allegations consistent with their prior beliefs are elicited. In a recent case on which one of the authors (KL) served as a consultant, the interviewer conducted 18 unrecorded interviews with a child beginning at age 2 years 9 months. Of course, interviewers do this for a reason. He or she believes their intuition regarding the child's abuse status is correct. Therefore, the interviewer may lead the child down a path of false reports in the interest of "helping the child." In such cases where abuse did not occur, however, the interviewer is actually exploiting the child and perhaps unjustifiably taking the child away from his or her parents. Forensic interviewers must remember the interview takes place for a reason: truth seeking. Well-planned investigation procedures can help maximize the odds that the truth will prevail.

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