

Odyssey

Rapid #: -6141505

IP: 130.160.21.158/ILL

CALL #: [http://sfx.princeton.edu:9003/sfx%5Fpul?url%5Fver=Z39.88-200 ...](http://sfx.princeton.edu:9003/sfx%5Fpul?url%5Fver=Z39.88-200...)

LOCATION: **PUL :: Interlibrary Services, Firestone :: Taylor & Francis Journals Complete:Full Text**

TYPE: Article CC:CCG
JOURNAL TITLE: Psychology, crime & law
USER JOURNAL TITLE: Psychology, Crime and law
PUL CATALOG TITLE: Psychology, crime & law [electronic resource] .
ARTICLE TITLE: Interviewer demeanor in forensic interviews of children
ARTICLE AUTHOR: Teoh, Y. S., & Lamb, M.
VOLUME: 19
ISSUE: 2
MONTH:
YEAR: 2013
PAGES: 145-159
ISSN: 1477-2744
OCLC #:
CROSS REFERENCE ID: [TN:395852][ODYSSEY:130.160.21.158/ILL]
VERIFIED:

BORROWER: **ALM :: Main Library**

PATRON: **wells (DE), muriel**

PATRON ID: mkwells



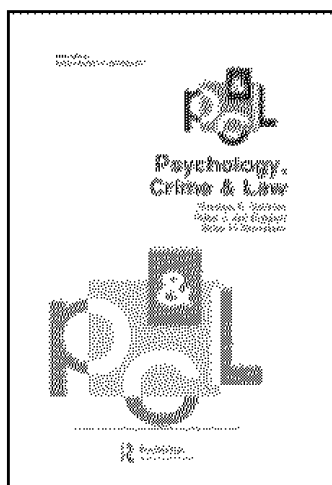
This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17 U.S. Code)
System Date/Time: 12/17/2012 7:29:08 AM MST

This article was downloaded by: [Princeton University]

On: 17 December 2012, At: 06:17

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Psychology, Crime & Law

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/gpcl20>

Interviewer demeanor in forensic interviews of children

Yee San Teoh^a & Michael Lamb^b

^a Department of Psychology, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, USA

^b Social and Developmental Psychology, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

Version of record first published: 18 Oct 2011.

To cite this article: Yee San Teoh & Michael Lamb (2013): Interviewer demeanor in forensic interviews of children, *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 19:2, 145-159

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2011.614610>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Interviewer demeanor in forensic interviews of children

Yee San Teoh^{a*} and Michael Lamb^b

^a*Department of Psychology, Brooklyn College, Brooklyn, USA;* ^b*Social and Developmental Psychology, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK*

(Received 22 September 2009; in final form 11 August 2011)

Previous findings on the effects of interviewer support on the quality of children's accounts of experienced events are mixed, and little is known about other aspects of interviewer demeanor that might influence children's responses in an investigative interview. The present study examined the relations between child age and interviewer verbosity, support, and authoritarian manner, and how these relations predicted children's verbosity and informativeness in investigative interviews with alleged sexual abuse victims in Malaysia. Investigative interviews with 75 children aged between five and 15 years were coded for interviewer verbosity, supportive statements, authoritarian manner, child verbosity and children's informativeness. We found that the investigative interviewers in our study were more talkative but less supportive while interviewing the younger than older children. Further, interviewer verbosity was negatively associated with children's informativeness while interviewer support appeared to facilitate more informative accounts by the children. The interviewers' authoritarian manner did not vary with child age, nor did it correlate with the children's verbosity and informativeness. Our findings suggest that investigative interviewers should behave supportively at all times, but refrain from excessive talking in the interview.

Keywords: forensic interviewing; children's testimony; interviewer support; interviewer demeanor; child abuse

Introduction

The information that child witnesses need to recount in forensic interviews about alleged abuse can evoke feelings of guilt, shame, embarrassment, and responsibility; further, conversations with unfamiliar adults are atypical. It is therefore not surprising that children rarely volunteer detailed and complete accounts of abusive events. The quality of the communication between children and interviewers can vary depending on a number of factors – for example, the personal attributes of the interviewer (Goodman, Sharma, Thomas, & Considine, 1995; Jackson & Crockenberg, 1998), the status and/or familiarity of the interviewer (Bjorklund et al., 2000), and the amount of social support shown by the interviewer (e.g. see Bottoms, Quas, & Davis, 2007 for a review). The present study sought to examine possible associations between different aspects of interviewers' demeanor and the witness accounts of alleged child sexual abuse victims in Malaysia.

*Corresponding author. Email: ysthyc@gmail.com

Supportive communication refers to verbal and non-verbal behaviors intended to assist those perceived as needing aid (Burleson & MacGeorge, 2002). Some researchers are concerned that children may be inclined to respond in order to please friendly or supportive interviewers, but at the expense of accuracy (e.g. Underwager & Wakefield, 1990). A significant amount of empirical evidence suggests otherwise – that supportive interviewing techniques can reduce children's anxiety and thus facilitate accurate and elaborate accounts of personally experienced events (Wood, McClure, & Birch, 1996). Most of the existing research on interviewer behavior has involved experimental manipulations of social support. In research on child witnesses, interviewers who are supportive typically build rapport, sit close to children, display positive facial expressions, and approach children in warm and engaging ways (e.g. Carter, Bottoms, & Levine, 1996; Davis & Bottoms, 2002; Goodman, Bottoms, Schwartz-Kenney, & Rudy, 1991). Non-supportive interviewers, in contrast, do not build rapport, appear distant and impassive, show negative facial expressions, and do not foster warmth while interviewing children.

Several studies show that children are often more complete and accurate in their memory reports and less suggestible when questioned by highly supportive interviewers (e.g. Carter et al., 1996; Davis & Bottoms, 2002; Goodman et al., 1991; Imhoff & Baker-Ward, 1999; see Bottoms et al., 2007, for a review). In Goodman et al. (1991), three- to four-year-olds and five- to seven-year-olds received a medical procedure and for half of the children, the interviewer acted in a supportive manner by giving the child a snack, smiling frequently, and complimenting them periodically without regard for accuracy. The remaining children were interviewed without these supportive behaviors. The researchers found that, with socially supportive interviewing, three- to four-year-olds were as accurate when answering the misleading questions as were the five- to six-year-olds. After a four-week (but not a two-week) delay, social support also reduced younger children's errors in response to misleading questions and to questions incorrectly suggesting that abuse had occurred. The authors speculated that interviewer-provided support decreased the extent to which children were intimidated, which in turn decreased their suggestibility.

Carter et al. (1996) investigated the effect of linguistically complicated interview questions and social support on five- to seven-year-olds' reports. Children played with an unfamiliar adult, and were interviewed by either a supportive or non-supportive interviewer immediately thereafter. Supportive interviewers built rapport with the children, used warm and friendly tones, gazed and smiled at the children often, and assumed a relaxed body posture. Carter and colleagues found that, although interviewer supportiveness did not appear to influence children's responses to free-recall and specific questions, children interviewed by supportive interviewers appeared more resistant to misleading questions than those interviewed by non-supportive interviewers. Imhoff and Baker-Ward (1999) replicated Carter et al.'s (1996) methodology with younger (three- and four-year-old) children, but found no effects of interviewer support on children's accuracy when describing a classroom demonstration they had witnessed.

The primary advantage of experimental research on interviewer demeanor is that the accuracy of the interviewees' reports can be determined. It is not clear, however, whether and how interviewer demeanor in experimental studies generalizes to actual investigative interviews. In experimental or analog studies

of interviewer demeanor, interviewers generally follow a script so that their behavior is consistently supportive or non-supportive throughout the interview. Further, the age ranges in these studies are typically restricted. It is critical therefore to study interviewer behavior in naturalistic or field studies where there are natural variations in interviewer demeanor and there is a broader range of child ages. Only two studies thus far have examined interviewer demeanor in the field. In a study on suspected child victims of sexual abuse, Hershkowitz, Orbach, Lamb, Sternberg, and Horowitz (2006) found that higher levels of interviewer support were associated with more informative responses in both disclosing and non-disclosing children, even though the non-disclosers were given less support than their disclosing counterparts. More recently, Hershkowitz (2009) explored associations between the level of support interviewers provided to four- to nine-year-old children and the amount of details children provided in forensic interviews. The author found that richer information in the children's responses was associated with a higher level of interviewer support, especially for less talkative children.

The aim of the present study was three-fold. First, we sought to obtain findings from a naturalistic study of interviewer demeanor in interviews with children using a new sample, thus addressing the dearth of research in the field. Second, in addition to interviewer support, we also examined two aspects of interviewer demeanor that have not been previously studied – verbosity and authoritarian manner. Third, we included a broader age range to analyze possible age differences in interviewer demeanor and its relation to the children's accounts. Because this was a field study, we could not determine the accuracy of the children's reports. Instead, we measured the children's verbosity and the proportion of informative responses in their narratives.

Our study was conducted in Malaysia, where investigative interviews were videotaped in such a way that the interviewers' nonverbal behavior could not be discerned. Thus we adopted Hershkowitz et al.'s (2006) approach, by distinguishing between supportive and unsupportive comments by the interviewers. Supportive comments unconditionally encouraged children to be informative by indicating the children were performing well in the interview and that the interviewers were aware of how the children might feel during disclosure. Unsupportive comments, on the other hand, exerted pressure on children to respond, challenged information they provided, or criticized the children's behavior. We also investigated the possible effects of interviewer verbosity – that is, whether talkative interviewers were more likely to elicit rich and informative accounts from children. Interviewer verbosity has not been previously examined, although how talkative interviewers are in forensic interviews can have a significant impact on how well children respond. We hypothesized that excessive talking by investigative interviewers might be cognitively overwhelming for children as the latter need to process both information-requesting prompts as well as explanations or instructions given by the interviewer, thus hindering their efforts to provide informative accounts.

Another aspect of interviewer demeanor that might be related to children's willingness to volunteer information is the interviewer's authoritarian or permissive manner. Research on the effects of adults' authoritarian, authoritative or permissive behavior has focused primarily on parent-child relationships (e.g.

Baumrind, 1973; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Authoritarian parents tend to be demanding and controlling, permissive parents often 'give-in' to children, and authoritative parents exert control by means of reasoning but also display warmth and affection. Nothing is known about the relation between these kinds of behaviors and children's behaviors in an interview context. Importantly, specific aspects of authoritarian behavior might be particularly effective when children are informants. By behaving in an authoritarian or authoritative manner, interviewers convey their expectations that children *should* rather than *could* respond to their questions (e.g. 'Tell me what he said.'). Conversely, if interviewers behave in a permissive manner (e.g. 'Can you tell me what he said?'), children might assume that they can choose not to respond or provide the information requested by the interviewer. The effects of interviewers' authoritarian behavior might also be stronger when displayed by unfamiliar adults, or specifically figures of authority. As suggested in studies on parenting (e.g. Greenfield & Cocking, 1994; Lambourn, Dornbusch, & Steinberg, 1996), an authoritarian approach might also be effective in cultures where authoritarian parenting is not viewed as over-controlling but an indication that the parent cares about the child and wishes the child to do well. Because we do not yet know the risks or benefits of authoritarian as opposed to permissive approaches when interviewing children, we sought to explore the possible associations between authoritarian demeanor and children's accounts.

A few researchers have found that social support does not affect all children equally (e.g. Davis & Bottoms, 2002). Individual differences in children's responsiveness to interviewer support have been linked to children's social support reserves (Carter et al., 1996; Davis & Bottoms, 2002), attachment style (e.g. Goodman, Quas, Batterman-Faunce, Riddlesberger, & Kuhn, 1997), and physiological reactivity in stressful or arousal-inducing situations (Quas, Bauer, & Boyce, 2004; Quas & Lench, 2007). Surprisingly, very little is known about age differences in children's responses to interviewer support, or the amount and/or type of support interviewers show. Goodman et al. (1991) showed that, with socially supportive interviewing, three- to four-year-olds were as accurate when answering the misleading questions as were five- to six-year-olds. However, previous research has not explored whether interviewers express different levels of support depending on children's ages. Most of the existing research on interviewer demeanor has focused on younger children, typically below 10 years of age.

Thus in this study we examined the relations between child age (five-15 years) and interviewer verbosity, support, and authoritarian manner, and how these relations predicted children's verbosity and informativeness in an investigative interview. We also distinguished between interviewer demeanor demonstrated before substantive questioning (pre-substantive phase) and during substantive questioning (substantive phase). In line with previous findings, we expected a positive association between interviewer support and children's verbosity and informativeness, particularly for younger children who might be more fearful of the interview setting. Based on the assumption that first impressions are crucial in setting the tone of the interview, we also expected interviewer demeanor in the pre-substantive rather than substantive phase to have a stronger relation with the children's narratives.

Method

Subjects

The sample included investigative interviews of 75 children (67 girls and eight boys), ranging from five to 15 years of age ($M = 10.65$, $SD = 3.47$). These interviews were conducted by British- and locally-trained police officers at the Child Protection Unit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Closed cases that yielded explicit allegations of fondling or penetrating sexual abuse were included in the study. Cases were closed for various reasons, but most of the cases in the current sample were finalized following conviction of the offender. All the children spoke Malay as their first language, with only a few occasionally using English words in their narratives. None of the children in the current sample were known to have a mental or physical disability.

Twenty-eight (37%) of the children reported a single incident, 44 (59%) reported two or more incidents, and three (4%) did not specify the frequency of incidents. All the alleged perpetrators were male and were of Malay or Malay-Indian ethnicity. In 27 (36%) of the cases, the alleged perpetrators were family members, 36 (48%) were familiar but unrelated individuals, 11 (15%) were unfamiliar to the alleged victims, and one (1%) was not specified. Familial perpetrators included biological family members, relatives, and step-relatives because polygamy and co-residence with step relatives are common practices in the Malay community in Malaysia. Nine (12%) of the children alleged that they were touched over their clothes, 17 (23%) reported touching under their clothes, and 49 (65%) described oral, anal, or vaginal penetration.

The investigative interviews were conducted by Malaysian police officers of similar rank, based all over the country and in various divisions within the Criminal Investigations Department. There were 15 female and three male interviewers, aged between 30 and 50 years. Eighty-one per cent of the investigative interviews were conducted by interviewers of Malay ethnicity, and 16% and 3% were conducted by interviewers of Indian and Chinese ethnicities, respectively. The Malay and Indian investigative interviewers were both male and female, whereas the Chinese interviewers were female. All the interviewers were proficient in the Malay language and thus every interview was conducted in Malay. Because only a small number of interviewers were of a different ethnicity and their Malay language proficiency was no different from that of the native speakers, interviewer ethnic differences were not expected and, thus, not considered in the analyses. The interviewing officer and the alleged victims were not always of the same gender and ethnicity.

The investigative interview procedure

The Malaysian Child Protection Unit investigative interviewers had previously attended training that included introductory lectures on developmental factors that might affect interview outcome, a simple interviewing protocol used by a Constabulary in the UK, and role-play sessions in which the trainees took turns playing the roles of investigative interviewers and child witnesses. The interviewers did not bring written guidelines into the interviewing room, but details of the police reports in question. Access to the protocol was denied. Therefore, the protocol described here is based both on a report provided by one of the Child Protection Unit investigative interviewers, and on patterns observed in the 75 interviews

transcribed. Questions were occasionally asked in a different sequence or even omitted and the type and complexity of the interviewers' questions varied. Police officers at the Child Protection Unit were obliged to wear civilian clothes in order to appear less intimidating to children. Investigative interviews at the Child Protection Unit generally lasted for 20–25 minutes. Breaks were never taken although the interviewees were allowed to request breaks.

In the introductory phase, the interviewers asked the children to state their full names and nicknames, and one of the nicknames was used to address the children thereafter. The interviewers then introduced themselves, explained the role of the Child Protection Unit, introduced the children to the video-recording equipment, clarified the children's tasks (the need to describe the events truthfully and in detail), and explained the ground rules and expectations (i.e. that the children can and should say 'I don't remember', 'I don't know', 'I don't understand,' or correct the interviewers when appropriate). The interviewers also assessed the children's understanding of the distinction between truth-telling and lying by way of a short fictitious story, and their understanding of the religious morality of lying, before evaluating their ability to tell the time and date. Children were also prompted to talk about their personal lives (e.g. their families and friends). In the transitional phase between the pre-substantive and substantive parts of the interview, a series of prompts were used to identify the target event(s) under investigation non-suggestively, by for example, making reference to a recent hospital visit or police report, previous disclosure, or asking the children if they knew the purpose of the investigative interviews. Following disclosure of the allegations, the free-recall phase began with the main invitation ('Tell me everything that happened from the very beginning to the end, the last incident.'). Follow-up open-ended prompts or facilitators were used (e.g. 'Then what happened?'), as were cued invitations ('You mentioned a person/object/action. Tell me everything about that'). Interviewers prompted the children to indicate whether the incidents occurred 'one time or more than one time' and proceeded to obtain incident-specific information. During substantive questioning, interviewers also used directive questions (focused questions addressing details previously mentioned by the child, e.g. 'Wh-' questions), or option-posing questions (mostly yes/no questions referencing new details that the child failed to address previously, e.g. 'Did he touch you over or under your clothes?'). Suggestive utterances that communicated to the child what response is expected ('At that time he was laying on top of you, wasn't he?') were strongly discouraged in the interviews. Interviewers ended the interview by checking if the children had any questions or by reverting to a neutral topic.

Coding

Transcripts for the 75 cases in this study were coded verbatim to evaluate the interviewers' demeanor and the number of details in the children's accounts and their informativeness.

Interviewer demeanor

Verbosity. Interviewers' utterances in the pre-substantive and substantive phases were coded quantitatively by rating the length of their responses. Verbosity was measured by the total number of words in an interview phase. Repeated utterances or words were also included.

Support. Interviewer support was measured by the proportion of supportive statements (out of the total of supportive and unsupportive statements) in the pre-substantive and substantive phases of the interview.

Supportive comments included comments encouraging children to be informative by indicating that the children were performing well in the interview or that the interviewers were aware of how the children might feel during the disclosure. Supportiveness was thus coded even when the children's utterances were non-substantive. Supportive comments were categorized using four exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories:

- (1) *Non-suggestive positive reinforcement* included positive responses to the children's behavior during the interview unrelated to the content of their reports or to any other substantive issue (e.g. 'You are telling very well').
- (2) *References to and concerns about the child's emotions* included expressions of empathy in response to the children's expressions of positive or negative emotion during the interview (e.g. 'It's OK to feel embarrassed, but I want to tell you that I talk to children about this all the time) and questions regarding the child's emotions during the interview (e.g. 'Are you feeling comfortable here?').
- (3) *Facilitators involved non-suggestive encouragement* – saying 'OK', 'mmm', or by echoing the children's last few words – to continue talking. Thus statements such as 'OK' following acquiescence to instructions or explanations were and not coded as facilitators, but facilitators following non-substantive responses were counted. Facilitators might also involve echoing (e.g. Interviewer asks, 'Where were you going?', and the child responds, 'Market', the following utterance 'You were going to the market' would be coded as a facilitator).
- (4) *Reassurance* – reassuring children with statements such as 'It's OK', or 'It's alright'.

By contrast, unsupportive comments were comments anywhere in the interview that exerted pressure on children by challenging information they provided or criticizing their behavior. Unsupportive comments were categorized using four exhaustive and mutually exclusive categories:

- (5) *Coercion* included conditional statements that positive or negative outcomes would follow if the child did or did not cooperate (e.g. 'If you tell me, you'll feel better'; 'If you tell me, we can help you'. e.g. 'We cannot help children who do not talk')

- (6) *Disregard or unempathetic response to the children's emotions* when the children expressed negative emotions (e.g. 'You should not be embarrassed. You must talk to me.')
- (7) *Expressions of doubt* regarding the information provided included references to the implausibility or contradicting nature of the statements (e.g. '... but I heard from your mum that [details] happened'), or to physical marks on the children's body ('If he did not hit your face, why do you have bruises on your face?'). Interviewer utterances questioning whether or not incidents or actions actually happened (e.g. 'Did it really happen?', 'Are you sure...?') were coded as expressions of doubt only when they were posed more than once.
- (8) *Negative references to the child's behavior* included such criticisms as 'You're looking away'; 'Don't touch the tape-recorder'; 'Sit still!'; 'You are talking too softly, I can't hear you'.

When interviewers did not make either supportive or unsupportive statements, the supportiveness of the utterance was coded as 'none'. When interviewers made both supportive and unsupportive statements in a single turn, the turn was coded as unsupportive, but this occurred in only three instances.

Authoritarian manner. Authoritarian manner was measured by the proportion of authoritarian statements (out of the total of authoritarian and permissive statements) in the pre-substantive and substantive phases of the interview. Authoritarian utterances were defined as those in which interviewers *instructed* the children to respond to questions or comply with instructions or warnings (e.g. 'Tell me what happened.' or 'Show me where he touched you.', 'I want you to tell me...', 'Sit down'). Permissive utterances were coded as those in which interviewers *asked* children to respond to questions or comply with instructions or warnings (e.g. 'Can you tell me...?' or 'Please tell me.', 'Can you sit down please?', 'Don't you want to tell me?').

Children's narratives

Verbosity. Children's accounts in the substantive phase were coded quantitatively by rating the length of their responses. Verbal and nonverbal responses were included. Length of response was measured by the total number of words in an interview phase. A single nonverbal response such as a nod for 'yes' was rated as one word, thus a verbal 'yes' response combined with a head nod was rated as two words. Repeated responses were also included.

Informativeness. Informative responses provided new forensically relevant information. Forensically relevant information included allegation-related details pertaining to the individual(s), action(s), place(s), object(s), time, emotion(s), sensation(s) and thought(s) associated with the alleged incident(s). Responses that were not informative did not include any forensically relevant information, contained repeated information, or were questions to the interviewer. A response that included both informative and uninformative responses was coded as informative, thus only

one type of response (informative or uninformative) was coded in a single conversational turn.

Inter-rater reliability

The principal investigator and a research assistant first trained on an independent set of transcripts until they agreed with one another concerning the classification or identification of at least 90% of the details. A quarter (25%) of the transcripts were then independently coded by the two coders to ensure that they remained equivalently reliable. The remaining cases were coded by the principal investigator.

Inter-rater agreement was assessed using Cohen's kappa. Agreement regarding the interviewers' verbosity was 0.97 for the pre-substantive phase and 0.96 for the substantive phase. Agreement regarding the identification and classification of supportiveness were 0.87 and 0.89, respectively. Regarding the identification and classification of authoritarian/permissive statements, coefficients of agreement were 0.96 and 0.99, respectively. Agreement for children's verbosity in the substantive phase was 0.98. Agreement regarding the identification and classification of informative responses were 0.85 and 0.89, respectively.

Results

Preliminary analyses of variances (ANOVAs) did not yield any significant effects of interviewer age and gender, child gender, and familiarity of the perpetrator on interviewers' demeanor, and children's verbosity and informativeness in the substantive phase. These variables were thus excluded from the main analyses.

The main analyses examined the (i) associations among the indices of interviewers' demeanor (verbosity, supportive statements, and authoritarian statements), (ii) relations between child age and interviewer demeanor, and (iii) predictive effects of interviewer demeanor on child verbosity and informativeness in the substantive phase. Proportions rather than raw numbers were computed for interviewer support (out of the total of supportive and non-supportive statements)

Table 1. Associations among interviewer verbosity, support, and authoritarian statements in the pre-substantive and substantive phases.

Variables	Pre-substantive			Substantive		
	Verbosity	Support	Authoritarian	Verbosity	Support	Authoritarian
<i>Pre-substantive</i>						
Verbosity		-0.03	0.18	0.51**	-0.51**	0.22
Support	0.00		0.19	0.08	0.00	0.17
Authoritarian	0.18	0.19		0.00	0.04	0.11
<i>Substantive</i>						
Verbosity	0.51**	0.08	0.00		-0.44**	0.18
Support	-0.51**	0.00	0.04	-0.44**		-0.15
Authoritarian	0.22	0.17	0.11	0.18	-0.15	

** $p < 0.01$

Table 2. Associations between child age and measures of interviewer demeanor.

Variables	Child age
<i>Pre-substantive</i>	
Verbosity	-0.37**
Support	-0.05
Authoritarian	-0.18
<i>Substantive</i>	
Verbosity	-0.42**
Support	0.29*
Authoritarian	-0.17

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

and authoritarian statements (out of the total of authoritarian and permissive statements).

Interviewer demeanor – verbosity, support, and authoritarian approach

Pearson product-moment correlations were used to examine whether the different indices of interviewer demeanor were related to each other, and whether interviewer demeanor in the pre-substantive and substantive phases were related to each other. Table 1 presents the correlations among pre-substantive and substantive verbosity, support, and authoritarian statements. Interviewer verbosity in the pre-substantive phase was positively correlated with interviewer verbosity in the substantive phase. Both pre-substantive and substantive interviewer verbosity were negatively correlated with interviewer support in the substantive phase. Hence, the more talkative the interviewers were before and during the substantive phase, the less supportive they were in the substantive phase. Authoritarian manner did not correlate with interviewer support and verbosity.

Child age and interviewer demeanor

Relations between child age (in years) and interviewer verbosity, support, and authoritarian statements were examined using Pearson product-moment correlations (see Table 2). Child age was negatively correlated with pre-substantive and substantive interviewer verbosity, where interviewers were more likely to be talkative to the younger than older children. There was a positive association between child age and substantive interviewer support – that is, interviewers were more likely to be supportive during substantive questioning when interviewing older than younger children. Child age was not significantly associated with authoritarian manner in both phases of the interview.

Interviewer demeanor, child verbosity and informativeness

Pearson product-moment correlations were used to identify the variables that might predict child verbosity and informativeness, and the correlations revealed that child age, pre-substantive and substantive interviewer verbosity and substantive support

Table 3. Predictive effects of child age, pre-substantive and substantive interviewer verbosity and substantive support on children's informativeness.

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>p</i>	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²
Model 1					0.32
Child age	0.02	0.01	0.40	0.00	
Pre-substantive interviewer verbosity	0.00	0.00	-0.29	0.01	
Model 2					0.33
Child Age	0.02	0.01	0.37	0.00	
Substantive interviewer verbosity	0.00	0.00	-0.33	0.00	
Model 3					0.33
Child Age	0.02	0.01	0.41	0.00	
Substantive interviewer support	0.81	0.25	0.32	0.00	

were significantly related to child informativeness. None of the variables were significantly correlated with child verbosity. Because our sample size was too small to include child age and three measures of interviewer demeanor, separate regression analyses were carried out for each of the interviewer demeanor variables. Authoritarian manner did not correlate with any of the variables of interest and was thus excluded.

Standard multiple regression analyses were conducted to examine the predictive effects of child age, pre-substantive and substantive interviewer verbosity and substantive support on children's informativeness. Table 3 shows the predictive effects of the three models computed and of the specific indices of interviewer demeanor. Because our sample size was relatively small, adjusted R^2 rather than R^2 values are reported. Children's informativeness in the substantive phase was significantly predicted by the combined effects of child age and pre-substantive interviewer verbosity, $F(2,74) = 17.88$, $p < 0.01$, substantive interviewer verbosity, $F(2,74) = 18.92$, $p < 0.01$, and substantive interviewer support, $F(2,74) = 19.56$, $p < 0.01$. Specifically, the more the interviewers spoke in the pre-substantive and substantive phase, the less informative younger children were during substantive questioning. The more supportive interviewers were in the substantive phase (more so with older children), the more informative older children were during substantive questioning.

Discussion

In the present study, we studied the relations between child age and interviewer verbosity, support, and authoritarian manner, and how these relations predict children's verbosity and informativeness in investigative interviews with alleged sexual abuse victims in Malaysia. We found that the investigative interviewers in our study were more talkative but less supportive while interviewing the younger than older children. Further, interviewer verbosity was found to be negatively related to children's informativeness while interviewer support appeared to facilitate more informative accounts by the children. The interviewers' authoritarian manner did not vary with child age, nor did it correlate with the children's verbosity and informativeness. We discuss these findings in more detail below.

In line with previous findings (see Bottoms et al., 2007 for a review), we expected interviewer support to reduce children's feelings of apprehension or intimidation, particularly if they were younger and more fearful of the interview setting. While we found a positive link between interviewer support and children's informativeness, alarmingly, the interviewers in this study addressed proportionally fewer supportive comments to the younger children during the substantive phase of the interview. We would expect interviewers to be more concerned about the younger children's motivation and level of comfort at the interview because the investigative interview setting is likely to be more intimidating to the younger children. Perhaps the older children in this study appeared more wary or reluctant at the beginning of the interview than their younger counterparts, thus prompting interviewers to repeatedly make supportive and encouraging statements. Based on the assumption that first impressions are crucial in setting the tone of the interview, we also expected interviewer demeanor in the pre-substantive rather than substantive phase to have a stronger relation with the children's narratives. Contrary to our prediction, only interviewer support in the substantive phase appeared to influence children's informativeness during substantive questioning. This finding underscores the impact of interviewers' behavior in the substantive phase on children's willingness and ability to talk about the allegations. However, because the interviewers were more supportive towards the older than younger children, the positive association between interviewer support and children's informativeness was more evident among the older children.

We also found interviewer verbosity in both the pre-substantive and substantive phases to be negatively associated with child age – that is, interviewers were more talkative while interviewing the younger than older children. Gilstrap and Papierno (2004) addressed the influence of child individual differences on interviewer behavior, proposing that children's suggestibility to leading questions might be more heavily influenced by individual differences in children's than interviewers' behavior. Similarly, Hershkowitz et al. (2006) found that the investigative interviewers in their study were less supportive of children who did not subsequently disclose abuse, and the researchers presumed that the interviewers behaved in that manner because the children had been uninformative earlier. In the present study, some children might have appeared unmotivated at the beginning of the interview, prompting the interviewers to talk too much, and this may in turn have led children to assume that they could choose how they wished to respond. This underscores the need to remind children that they need to report everything that they know and elaborate as much as they can because interviewers do not know about the alleged incident. Although interviewers should consistently and non-suggestively encourage children to respond, they also need to explicitly communicate the type of information and level of elaboration expected. Another finding that provoked concern was the interviewers' tendency to remain talkative to the younger children later on in the interview.

Because we do not yet know the risks and benefits of authoritarian as opposed to permissive approaches when interviewing children, another aim of the present study was to explore the possible relations between authoritarian demeanor and children's informativeness. By behaving in an authoritarian manner, interviewers convey their expectations that children *should* rather than *could* respond to their questions (e.g. 'Tell me what he said.' 'You said he dragged you. Tell me more about that.').

Conversely, if interviewers behave in a permissive manner (e.g. 'Can you tell me what he was wearing?'), children might assume that they can choose not to respond or provide the information requested by interviewers. Unexpectedly, however, we did not find significant relations between interviewers' authoritarian manner and children's verbosity and informativeness. *Post hoc* analyses revealed that in several interviews, interviewers alternated between authoritarian and permissive statements. Thus when interviewers alternated between saying 'Tell me ...' and 'Can you tell me...', the children might have become confused as to whether they could choose not to respond as requested. This might also explain why some children benefit from interviewer support, and some do not. Consider the literature on parent-child attachment. According to Main and Hesse (1990), inconsistent maternal behavior violating infants' expectations can be frightening, leading these infants to develop a disorganized pattern of attachment to their mothers. In line with this suggestion, it is also possible that individual differences in children's attachment lead some children to be more sensitive to contradictory interviewer demeanor. Attachment style, or the manner in which children have formed relationships with primary caregivers (Bowlby, 1969), may determine children's responsiveness to interviewer support, and be related to children's memory and suggestibility. Davis and Bottoms (2002) suggested that insecurely attached children, who are generally more apprehensive and less trusting of others during social interactions, may be more sensitive to interviewer supportiveness than securely attached children who are generally at ease during social interactions.

In the context of investigative interviews, where the 'adults know and children ask questions' rule is reversed, interviewer support might lead some children to be more susceptible to the social demands of the interview. Thus some children might appear to benefit from highly supportive interviewer behavior because they are more responsive and elaborate in their accounts, but the information they provide might reflect their efforts to please the interviewers rather than report what actually happened. Previous studies have found a positive relation between interviewer support and the accuracy of children's recall accounts (e.g. Goodman et al., 1991), but this finding has not been replicated in field studies such as ours where the accuracy of child witnesses' reports is difficult to determine. Until the mechanism that links interviewer support to accurate recall is identified and tested, we can assume that interviewer support in the field appears to help children respond informatively in the context of a forensic interview.

Of course, the children may have responded to combined or overlapping effects of supportive and authoritarian demeanor. In the parenting literature, parents who display warm and supportive behavior while at the same time being in control are labeled 'authoritative' (Baumrind, 1966, 1967). Because of unequal sample sizes, supportive-authoritarian versus supportive-non-authoritarian effects could not be compared. Thus some children in this study may have been responding to the effects of authoritative (supportive and authoritarian) versus non-authoritative (supportive and permissive) behavior. Children might be motivated to be informative only when interviewers demand children to respond, yet at the same time, display warmth and encouragement. The possible combined effects of supportive and authoritarian interviewer behavior might also explain why supportive behavior does not always facilitate children's reports and why some children appear more suggestible while others are less so when interviewers are supportive.

The findings reported here suggest that interviewer social support in the context of a forensic interview helps children provide new information about an alleged abuse, although such facilitative effect of interviewer support was more significant for older children because the proportion of the interviewers' supportive statements increased with child age. This underscores the need for interviewers to remain socially supportive even though they might have more difficulty interviewing younger children. Interviewers should also monitor how much they talk, as excessive talking can hinder children's motivation to discuss the substantive topic. An imperative for future research is the study of individual differences in children's responsiveness to social support manipulations; identifying individual difference variables and controlling for them in social support studies should allow for more specific examinations of the effects of social support. Nonetheless, findings from the present study provide further insight into the effects of interviewer demeanor in forensic interviews with children.

References

- Baumrind, D. (1966). Effects of authoritative parental control on child behavior. *Child Development, 37*, 887–907.
- Baumrind, D. (1967). Child care practices anteceding three patterns of preschool behavior. *Genetic Psychology Monographs, 75*, 43–88.
- Baumrind, D. (1973). The development of instrumental competence through socialization. In A. Pick (Ed.), *Minnesota Symposia on child psychology* (Vol. 7, pp. 3–46). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Bjorklund, D., Cassel, W., Bjorklund, B., Brown, R., Park, C. . . . , & Ernst, K. (2000). Social demand characteristics in children's and adults' eyewitness memory and suggestibility: The effect of different interviewers on free recall and recognition. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 14*, 421–433.
- Bottoms, B.L., Quas, J.A., & Davis, S.L. (2007). The influence of interviewer-provided social support on children's suggestibility, memory, and disclosures. In M.E. Pipe, M. Lamb, Y. Orbach, & A.C. Cederborg (Eds.), *Child sexual abuse: Disclosure, delay and denial* (pp. 135–158). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Attachment* (Vol. 1). New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Burleson, B.R., MacGeorge, E.L. (2002). Supportive communication. In M.L. Knapp, J.A. Daly (Eds.), *Handbook of interpersonal communication* (pp. 374–424). Sage.
- 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.
- Davis, S.L., & Bottoms, B.L. (2002). Effects of social support on children's eyewitness reports: A test of the underlying mechanism. *Law and Human Behavior, 26*, 185–215.
- Gilstrap, L.L., & Papierno, P.B. (2004). Is the cart pushing the horse? The effects of child characteristics on children's and adults' interview behaviors. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 18*, 1059–1078.
- Goodman, G.S., Bottoms, B.L., Schwartz-Kenney, B.M., & Rudy, L. (1991). Children's testimony about a stressful event: Improving children's reports. *Journal of Narrative and Life History, 1*, 69–99.
- Goodman, G.S., Quas, J.A., Batterman-Faunce, J.M., Riddlesberger, M., & Kuhn, J. (1997). Children's reactions to and memory for a stressful event: Influences of age, anatomical dolls, knowledge, and parental attachment. *Applied Developmental Science, 1*, 54–75.
- Goodman, G.S., Sharma, A., Thomas, S.F., & Considine, M. (1995). Mother knows best: Effects of relationship status and interviewer bias on children's memory. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 60*, 195–228.
- Greenfield, P.M., & Cocking, R.R. (Eds.) (1994). Effects of interactive entertainment technologies on development. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 15*, 1–2.

- Hershkowitz, I., Orbach, Y., Lamb, M.E., Sternberg, K.J., & Horowitz, D. (2006). Dynamics of forensic interviews with suspected abuse victims who do not disclose abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30*, 753–769.
- Hershkowitz, I., Orbach, Y., Lamb, M.E., Sternberg, K.J., & Horowitz, D. (2009). Socio-emotional factors in investigative interviews of children, alleged victims of sexual abuse. *Child Maltreatment, 14*(2), 172–181.
- Imhoff, M.C., & Baker-Ward, L. (1999). Preschoolers' suggestibility: Effects of developmentally appropriate language and interviewer supportiveness. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 20*, 407–429.
- Jackson, S., & Crockenberg, S. (1998). A comparison of suggestibility in 4-year-old girls in response to parental or stranger misinformation. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, 19*, 527–542.
- Lambour, S.D., Dornbusch, S.M., & Steinberg, L. (1996). Ethnicity and community context as moderators of the relations between family decision making and adolescent adjustment. *Child Development, 67*, 283–301.
- Maccoby, E.E., & Martin, J.A. (1983). Socialization in the context of the family: Parent–child interaction. In P.H. Mussen (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology* (Vol. 4, pp. 1–101). New York, NY: Wiley.
- Main, M., & Hesse, E. (1990). Parents' unresolved traumatic experiences are related to infant disorganized attachment status: Is frightened and/or frightening parental behavior the linking mechanism? In M. Greenberg, D. Cicchetti, & M. Cummings (Eds.), *Attachment in the preschool years: Theory, research, and intervention* (pp. 161–182). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Quas, J.A., Bauer, A.B., & Boyce, W.T.B. (2004). Emotion, reactivity, and memory in early childhood. *Child Development, 75*, 1–18.
- Quas, J.A., & Lench, H.C. (2007). Arousal at encoding, arousal at retrieval, interviewer support, and children's memory for a mild stressor. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 21*, 289–305.
- Underwager, R., & Wakefield, H. (1990). *The real world of child interrogations*. Springfield, IL: C.C. Thomas.
- Wood, J.M., McClure, K.A., & Birch, R.A. (1996). Suggestions for improving interviews in child protection agencies. *Child Maltreatment, 1*, 223–230.