Enhancing narrative coherence in simulated interviews about child abuse

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Abstract

Purpose – Simulated child interviews, where adults play the role of a child witness for trainee investigative interviewers, are an essential tool used to train investigators to adhere to non-leading, open-ended questions. The aim of this study is to examine whether the use of a training procedure that guides persons playing the role of a child in simulated interviews results in interviewees producing more coherent narratives (measured by the number of story grammar details).

Design/methodology/approach – A total of 80 police officers individually engaged in ten-minute interviews, whereby an untrained (colleague), or trained respondent, played the role of the child interviewee. For each child respondent condition, the interviews varied according to child age (five or eight years).

Findings – As predicted, trained respondents reported a higher proportion of story grammar elements and a lower proportion of contextual information than the untrained respondents, as well as more story grammar elements in response to open-ended questions. However, there were limitations in how well both groups tailored their story grammar to the age of the child they were representing.

Originality/value – These findings demonstrate that our training procedure promotes a more coherent interviewee account, and facilitates a response style that is more reinforcing of open-ended questions.

Keyword(s):

Interviews; Research; Narratives; Role play; Witnesses; Children (age groups).
Ongoing regular practice plays a critical role in the mastery of complex skills across all professional domains (Donovan and Radosevich, 1999; Ericsson et al., 1993; Helsen et al., 1998; Hodges and Starkes, 1996). The skill of investigative interviewing of children is no exception. Contrary to the views of many police professionals, adherence to non-leading, open-ended[1] questions (the core skill involved in investigative interviewing) cannot be learned “on the job” (Woody, 2005). It requires considerable practice and feedback, at least in part via regular simulated interviews where adults play the role of the child witness recalling abuse (Powell, 2008). The benefit of these practice interviews has been demonstrated empirically by tracking an increase in interviewers' use of open-ended questions when practice is implemented and a decline in performance following a period of time (e.g. 12 weeks) when no practice has been maintained (Lamb et al., 2002a, b; Orbach et al., 2000; Powell et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2009; Sternberg et al., 2001).

From a human learning perspective, several features define a good practice task. First, correct behaviour (in this context, non-leading, open-ended questions) needs to be reinforced (Powell et al., 2008). Second, the task needs to be challenging enough so that trainee interviewers will initially make errors and then correct them. Good interviewing is not the ability to generate open questions per se but the ability to maintain the use of these questions when the interviewee (for cognitive, social or emotional reasons) offers little spontaneous forensically relevant detail. Unless simulated interview exercises provide the stimuli (e.g. silence, lack of specific detail, irrelevant or ambiguous responses) that would normally provoke an inappropriate question, it is unlikely that learning that arises during the practice sessions would be applied to challenging interview contexts in the field (Wright et al., 2007). Third, trainees need to practice their skills using activities that are both realistic and engaging. In the context of learning how to interview children about abuse, trainee interviewers appear most engaged when the adult playing the child is able to mimic children's response style (i.e. reactions, mannerisms and vocabulary), as well as mimic the ambiguous and protracted manner in which children typically disclose abusive details (Powell and Wright, 2008).

In recognition of the importance of staging good practice tasks in training programs on investigative interviewing of children, our research team developed a set of procedures to guide persons in how to play the role of a child disclosing abuse (Powell et al., 2008). The aim of these procedures was to assist the persons playing the role of the child to do so in a manner that was engaging for the trainee interviewer, that reinforced open-ended questions and that was challenging enough to provoke the interviewer to deviate from best-practice (i.e. to make mistakes). These procedures are displayed in Table I and include the following: adhere to a script; disclose event details in response to initial invitation; respond to broad open-ended questions with a maximum of four acts or activities; keep responses to specific questions brief; do not provide feasible responses to complex, multifaceted questions; and allow concentration to lapse. These criteria were developed after considerable analysis of children's response styles in field interviews and analysis of trainee interviewers' perceptions about the factors that precipitate a deviation from best-practice (Hughes-Scholes and Powell, 2010a; Wright and Powell, 2006).

To date, several evaluation studies have been conducted on the abovementioned role-play procedure, resulting in consistently positive conclusions. Compared to untrained professionals, persons who have been taught to use our role-play procedure are: perceived by trainee interviewers to be more realistic (Powell and Wright, 2008); more likely to reinforce open-ended questions with event details (Powell et al., 2008); and more likely to elicit interviewer behaviour that is similar to the way in which interviewers question children in the
field (Powell et al., 2010). Further, professionals who have been trained using simulated interviews that adhere to our role-play procedure are better able to maintain open-ended questions after the training (practice and feedback) has been completed (Powell et al., 2008). Research on the value of trained actors in simulated child abuse interviews, however, is still in its infancy. There may be other benefits associated with the use of our role-play criteria. One potential benefit, which is the focus of this study, is that the role-play procedure may well elicit a more coherent narrative account of abuse.

Narrative coherence refers to the degree to which the account is well structured (i.e. told in a clear and logical manner by the narrator) such that the listener is able to fully comprehend the event details being conveyed (Liles, 1993; Westby, 1991). Within investigative interviews, narrative coherence is typically measured in terms of the number and type of story grammar elements (Feltis et al., 2010; Westcott and Kynan, 2004). Such story grammar elements include the setting (temporal information and details about the physical setting where the events took place), the initiating event (the activity/act that commenced or initiated the abusive episode), the witness’ internal response (goals, affective states or cognitions evoked by the initiating event), the plan (set of intentions formed in the mind of the person affected by the initiating event), the attempt or act (what the alleged offender did in his or her effort to execute the plan, i.e. the actual abusive act), the direct consequences (outcomes of the act) and the resolution or story outcome (Stein and Glenn, 1979).

Overall, we predict that the role-play procedure will enhance narrative coherence because it encourages the person playing the role of the child to learn a scenario and to disperse abuse-related content gradually throughout the interview. The process of having to prepare a scenario would highlight, for the person, potential story elements. Further, when details of a story unfold gradually, over time, the speaker would more frequently need to reintroduce or remind the listener of relevant story grammar details, as new details generated would need to be placed in their relevant context (Dimino et al., 1990). If this prediction is correct, then the structure of the abusive accounts should be markedly similar irrespective of whether the person playing the role of the child adhered to our script[2]. However, the persons who had pre-prepared the script should produce proportionally more story grammar elements.

Our main incentive for examining the impact of the role-play procedure on narrative coherence (story grammar details) was to determine whether the procedure could have accounted, in part, for the reported benefits in shaping trainee interviewers’ performance (Powell et al., 2008). Narratives that are coherent are judged more favourably by listeners because they are easier to understand (Newman and McGregor, 2006; Schneider and Winship, 2002). If the role-play procedure that we developed results in responses to open-ended questions that are more meaningful, this would be encouraging adherence to these questions, which is considered best practice.

**Method**

The design employed is a 2 (witness age: five years vs. eight years)×2 (respondent: trained vs untrained) design with both variables manipulated between subjects.

**Participants**

Child abuse investigators (n=120) were recruited from several police and child protection organisations in Australia to play the role of the interviewers and untrained respondents.
These participants were invited individually by their supervisors to partake in this study to improve their skills in interviewing (after the simulated interviews were completed for the purpose of this study, additional interviews were staged along with individual feedback). All participants who applied to attend the training were told that participation in the research component of the training was voluntary. However, they all willingly provided consent, and no participant who provided consent was excluded. All consenting professionals were randomly assigned to roles as follows: 80 played the role of the interviewer and 40 played the role of the child interviewee, with half the participants in each group being randomly assigned to the two different child respondent age groups. Professionals were assigned to the experimental conditions so that gender was roughly equated. There was no significant difference across conditions in the number of years the professionals had worked in the area of child abuse investigation (Ms ranged from six to eight years across the subgroups, \( p=0.93 \)).

Three psychologists served as the trained respondents who played the role of the child in 40 of the simulated interviews. Two of the trained respondents had at least two years experience in the area of child protection and abuse investigation and had read and assessed numerous field interviews. The third had experience working with children; however, not in a child abuse or police training context.

Importantly, none of the participants were aware of the issue being investigated in this study. Participants were merely told that a training program was being trialled that encouraged adherence to best-practice guidelines.

**Procedure**

The study design and procedure was approved by the University Ethics Committee, as well as those of the participating organisations. The persons who were trained to follow our procedure when playing the role of the child (i.e. the trained respondents) were taught how to provide a realistic account of an abusive event as experienced by a child aged five or eight years old. Importantly, at no stage did these respondents receive knowledge about or instruction on how to provide story grammar. The training involved three stages that spanned 25 hours, over 12 weeks. Stage 1 involved the development of scripts (one per respondent) about different hypothetical five- or eight-year-old children. Each script included:

- personal information about the child (e.g. family make-up, personality);
- abuse history (e.g. acts perpetrated, relationship with offender); and
- the context and alleged consequences of the initial disclosure.

Stage 2 involved the development of the standardised procedure for playing the role of a child. This procedure related to:

- the amount of information to report in response to various questions;
- behaviours or mannerisms (e.g. when to look distracted, topic change, use of pauses); and
- the use of appropriate language.

Finally, Stage 3 involved rehearsal of the response styles using familiar as well as unfamiliar scenarios. Feedback was offered about the style of each trained respondent. Although the respondents had their own mannerisms, rehearsal was maintained until the substance and structure of their performance was markedly similar. After the initial 12-week training period,
each of the trained respondents practiced the procedures once per fortnight during the entire period of data collection.

The simulated interviews each took ten minutes and were conducted in small break-off rooms at a large training facility. Five minutes prior to each interview, those persons assigned to playing the role of the child (the trained respondents as well as the untrained respondents) were given a case scenario of between 50 and 65 words. For each interview, a new case scenario was provided (which was not a case scenario used by the trained respondents in any prior practice). The scenarios reflected a range of abuse and involved male and female children all of whom were either five years old or eight years old. An example scenario is below:

Lucy is a five-year-old girl. When tucking her into bed one night her mother gave her a kiss on the head. In response Lucy told her mother that she has to kiss her on the lips to make her feel better. When her mother asked who kisses her on the lips, she replied Jeff; however, Lucy would not talk about Jeff after that.

All participants assigned to the role of the interviewer were instructed to commence the interview at the substantive phase by asking, “Tell me what you're here to talk about today”. They were instructed to elicit as detailed and accurate information about the alleged abusive event as they could, using free-narrative format where possible. A timer was used to ensure that the interviews did not exceed ten minutes.

Coding protocol

Interviews were audio taped and transcribed verbatim for coding. Respondents' narratives were coded for story grammar, contextual information, don't know responses and unrelated speech. The story grammar component was then further broken down into individual story grammar elements: the setting, the initiating event, the internal response, the plan, the attempt, the direct consequences and the resolution, using the definitions referred to in the introduction of this paper. Contextual information included material that was related, but not central, to the story being narrated. This included explanatory information, such as the relationship between an alleged perpetrator and the child's family (e.g. “He's lived down the road from us for years”) and other detail that was not central to the narrative in a story grammar (i.e. structural) sense (e.g. “He always has two sugars in his coffee”). Don't know responses included either a verbal response or a non-verbal action such as shoulder shrugging. Unrelated speech included details that referred to the task management of the interview itself, the child's responses to the interviewer telling them to speak louder or to sit still and the child asking the interviewer a question.

Next, each question asked by the interviewers during the substantive phase of the interview (i.e. whilst discussing the event) was divided into open-ended and specific questions. Open-ended questions were defined as any questions that encouraged an elaborate response without dictating what specific information the child needed to report and without introducing information not yet mentioned by the child (e.g. “Tell me everything that happened when Uncle Joe touched your rude spot”, “What happened after you played the tickling game?”). Any non-open question was classified as a specific question, which included specific cued-recall (e.g. “Wh” questions) and yes/no questions.
All transcripts were coded for question type and story grammar by one researcher, and 20 per cent were also coded by a second researcher who was not otherwise involved in the study. Inter-rater reliability, calculated as agreements/(agreements + disagreements) was at least 90 per cent for each of the categories listed above. Discrepancies were resolved and the codes assigned by the principal coder were used in all analyses.

Results

Preliminary analyses

A 2 (respondent: trained vs untrained)×2 (witness age: five vs. eight years) was initially performed to ensure that the number of open-ended questions was similar across the conditions. As explained earlier, questioning has a strong relationship with the degree of narrative detail (Snow et al., 2009) and therefore we needed to ensure that this was controlled. The findings revealed no effect of witness age, $F(1, 79)=0.001, p=0.97$, or respondent, $F(1, 79)=1.05, p=0.41$, on the number of open-ended questions (trained respondent five years, $M=16.25, SD =8.86$; trained respondent eight years, $M=18.85, SD=5.53$; untrained respondent five years, $M=15.75, SD=7.20$; untrained respondent eight years, $M=17.05, SD=6.18$). For all the analyses reported in this study, the results did not differ depending on whether the dependent measures referred to the absolute number or proportion of story grammar elements. For ease of presentation, therefore, the results are reported for proportion scores only.

Proportion of story grammar content relative to other utterances

A total of 4,914 utterances were provided by respondents. Of these, 1,684 utterances (34 per cent of all utterances) were classified as story grammar and 2,913 (59 per cent) was contextual information. Don't know responses (87) and unrelated speech (230) accounted for 2 per cent and 5 per cent of utterances respectively. Analyses revealed no significant differences across the trained versus untrained respondent groups according to the mean number of overall words reported by respondents, and the mean length of individual story grammar utterances.

Table II presents the mean proportion of story grammar elements, contextual information, don't know responses and unrelated speech reported by respondents across conditions. Proportion scores were calculated for each participant by dividing the total number of individual elements (utterance types) reported in this table by total number of utterances reported. A series of 2 (respondent)×2 (witness age) analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted on the mean proportions of story grammar elements and contextual information. Two significant findings were revealed: a main effect of respondent for both story grammar elements ($F(1, 76)=19.01, p < 0.001$) and contextual information ($F(1, 76)=16.62, p < 0.001$). Trained respondents reported a higher proportion of story grammar ($M=0.40, SD=0.13$) and a lower proportion of contextual information ($M=0.54, SD=0.13$) compared to the untrained respondents (story grammar $M=0.28, SD=0.09$; contextual information=$M=0.65, SD=0.10$). There were no other significant main effects or interactions.
Proportion of story grammar content reported in response to open-ended questions

For each individual interview, two proportion scores were calculated to reflect the degree to which the respondents rewarded open-ended questions with story grammar utterances. The first proportion score was calculated by dividing the total number of story grammar elements that were elicited by an open-ended question by the total number of story grammar elements elicited overall in the interview. The second proportion score reflected the proportion of all open-ended questions in the interview that elicited story grammar utterances (irrespective of the amount). A series of 2 (respondent) x 2 (witness age) ANOVAs (one for each measure) revealed a main effect of respondent irrespective of the way that the proportion score was calculated. Specifically, the persons trained to play the role of the child provided more story grammar elements in response to open-ended questions (M=0.63, SD=0.30) compared to the untrained respondents (M=0.42, SD=0.22), F(1, 76)=12.28, p < 0.001. Further, proportionately more open-ended questions were rewarded with story grammar by the trained respondents (M=0.71, SD=0.30) than untrained respondents (M=0.42, SD=0.22, M=0.39, SD=0.21, F(1, 76)=30.26, p < 0.001). There were no main effects or interactions involving age group.

Individual story grammar elements reported

The breakdown of utterances for the individual story grammar elements was as follows:

- attempt details accounted for the majority or 33 per cent (559) of all respondents' story grammar utterances;
- initiating event details accounted for 21 per cent (357) of all story grammar utterances;
- direct consequence accounted for 18 per cent (297);
- internal response accounted for 14 per cent (230);
- setting accounted for 9 per cent (143);
- resolution accounted for 5 per cent (92); and
- plan details accounted for less than 1 per cent (six) of all respondents' story grammar utterances.

Table III presents the mean proportion of individual story grammar elements (setting, initiating event, internal response, plan, attempt, direct consequence and resolution) across the conditions. For each participant, a proportion score was calculated by dividing the number of times that a story grammar element occurred in the respondent's narrative and dividing this by the total number of story grammar elements that the respondent used over the entire interview. A floor effect occurred in each participant group for three of the story grammar elements: setting, plan and resolution. As such, no analyses were performed on these variables. However, a series of 2 (respondent) x 2 (witness age) ANOVAs were performed on each of the remaining four story grammar elements. Only one significant finding was revealed: a main effect of respondent on “attempt” details, F(1, 78)=7.35, p < 0.01. This revealed that a higher proportion of the trained respondents' accounts reflected “attempt” details (M=0.36, SD=0.13) compared to that of untrained respondents (M=0.27, SD=0.13).
Discussion

This study has made a small, but nonetheless important, contribution to the existing research on investigative interviewer training. It has demonstrated that our procedure for playing the role of the child witness in simulated abuse interviews promotes a more coherent interviewee account. Further, it has demonstrated that in terms of narrative detail (story grammar), the role-play procedure facilitates a response style that is more reinforcing of open-ended questions. So far, evaluations of the prevalence of story grammar in child witness interviews, has been limited to interviews with actual children, as opposed to simulated practice exercises (Feltis et al., 2010; Snow et al., 2009; Westcott and Kynan, 2004). The significance of the current finding is that it demonstrates that better narrative coherence could have contributed (albeit in part) to the benefit of our role-play procedure in promoting adherence to open-ended questions (Powell et al., 2008) and the fact that our procedure for playing the role of the child is favoured (over standard role-plays) by trainee interviewers (Powell and Wright, 2008).

The findings of this study should not be considered particular to the persons we selected to play the role of the child. For practical reasons, and to ensure that the experimental condition was consistent with prior research, the persons who followed our procedure in the role-play exercises were not randomly selected from the same pool of participants as those who were given no formal procedures. They were psychology graduates who had experience in child abuse investigation but were recruited through their role as research assistants (as opposed to participants in interviewer training courses). The rationale for concluding that the recruitment process did not influence the results is threefold. First, the prevalence of individual story grammar details was similar irrespective of whether the persons utilised the procedure. Second, the trained and untrained respondents in the current study were all unfamiliar with the scenarios they were required to play (a new 50-65 word scenario was shown to all participants five minutes prior to the simulated tasks). Finally, our prior research has demonstrated that investigative interviewers (similar to the cohort recruited for the control condition in this study) are able to adopt the role-play procedures, even after relatively brief instruction (Hughes-Scholes and Powell, 2010b).

Importantly, the role-play procedure produced an interviewee response style that (in terms of story grammar detail) could be considered generalisable to the field (Cavezza, 2008; Gregory, 2004). To illustrate this conclusion, consider the figure presented in the Appendix. This figure depicts the pattern of responding in relation to individual story grammar elements in this study and that observed in actual child abuse interviews (Feltis et al., 2010). Apart from the lower proportion of attempt details for the untrained respondents and the greater (apparent) focus on setting details in the field interviews, the pattern is remarkably similar despite the fact that the field interviews included a wider age range and were longer, and the motivation to elicit highly specific contextual details (on the part of the interviewer) in the field interviews would have been greater. The only limitation was the ability of the professionals to tailor their responses to the age of the child they were role-playing. Even though story grammar improves with age during childhood (Snow et al., 2009; Westcott and Kynan, 2004), this developmental trend was not revealed for either of the two witness respondent groups.

Should it matter (from a training perspective) whether the interviewee response style is tailored to the age of the child? This is probably not important in initial training courses where interviewers are merely learning to adhere to open-ended questions. However, as the
expertise of interviewers improves and interviewer instruction becomes more finetuned, so too should the performance of persons playing the role of the child. Indeed, Feltis et al. (2010) found that (within the field setting) different types of open-ended questions are differentially effective in eliciting different types of story grammar details, with the strength of the relationship between various questions and story grammar details varying across different child age groups. If interviewers are to learn to maximise story grammar detail and to tailor their performance (in a realistic manner) to different child witness ages, then more precise role-play procedures (i.e. those that are more sensitive to the age of the child) may become critical.

Despite the limitations of this work, the findings highlight the importance of further debate and research about the type of simulated interviews that should be employed in training programs as both assessment and educative tools. To date, simulated practice interviews have tended to be designed on an ad hoc or convenience basis (Powell, 2002), and most current training programs are ineffective in maintaining adherence to best-practice interviewing (open-ended questions) in the long term (Powell et al., 2005). Although it is too premature to conclude that the benefits of using the child respondent training procedure on a broad scale would outweigh its cost, the work so far suggests that training professionals to play the role of a child abuse interviewee can potentially assist in improving interviewers' awareness of the importance of their role in shaping narrative abuse-related detail.

**Figure A1** Proportion of individual story grammar element elicited across the conditions respondent× victim age sub-groups

**Notes:** S = Setting; IE = Initiating Event; IR = Internal Response; P = Plan; A = Attempt; DC = Direct Consequence; R = Resolution
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rule</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adhere to a script</td>
<td>Develop a script that includes personal information about the child, such as family make-up and personality. Abuse history could be outlined, such as the acts perpetrated, where and when events occurred and the relationship with the offender. The script could also include the context and consequences of the child's initial disclosure. The script is not to be read verbatim; it is merely a guide to use throughout the interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disclose event in response to initial invitation, but not too much detail</td>
<td>Disclose information about the event in response to the interviewer's question “Tell me what you've come here to talk to me about today?” If the purpose of a mock interview is to allow an interviewer to practice open-ended questions, there is little value in saying “I don't know” in response to the initial invitation. However, it is important that you only provide broad information. A common mistake is for adult respondents to be too specific here. When disclosing abuse, it is not uncommon for young children to provide ambiguous statements. Interviewers need to be encouraged to follow-up, rather than ignore, such broad or ambiguous statements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to broad open-ended questions with a maximum of 4 acts or activities</td>
<td>Provide no more than four acts or activities in response to open-ended questions and minimal encouragers. Young children often provide only a few pieces of information at a time followed with the phrase 'that's it.' Interviewers need to practice gentle persistence in eliciting further information with subsequent open-ended questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep responses to specific questions brief</td>
<td>By definition specific questions dictate what specific information the child needs to provide. They narrow the range of responses, thus it is important to restrict the response to the detail that is being requested. From a training perspective, you do not want to reward specific questions with narrative detail. Best-practice guidelines encourage the use of open-ended questions where possible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not provide feasible responses to questions that are complex, multifaceted or reflect concepts that are not meaningful to young children</td>
<td>Miscommunication often occurs because the concept being requested, or the question, is phrased in a manner that is too complex for the child's level of cognitive and language development. Phrasing questions in an age-appropriate way is not necessarily easy, particularly for those professionals who have not had extensive training in child development or do not speak with young children on a daily basis. When playing the role of young children, it is important not to reward inappropriate questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow concentration to lapse</td>
<td>Young children have limited concentration spans and sometimes find it hard to stay focused on a particular topic. There are several ways in which limited attention is depicted, including changing the topic, fidgeting and letting eyes wander. This is especially likely to occur (a) at the later stages of the interview; (b) when the nature of the questions are inappropriate for the child's age and (c) when numerous questions are asked in a row.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table I.**
Summary of guidelines for playing the role of the child in mock interviews about abuse
Table II
Mean proportion of story grammar elements, contextual information, don’t know responses and unrelated speech across conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trained respondent</th>
<th>Untrained respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 yrs</td>
<td>8 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Story grammar</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual information</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>0.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know responses</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated speech</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 20 participants in each of the respondents x age cells

Table III
Mean proportion of story grammar elements (setting, initiating event, internal response, plan, action, direct consequence and resolution) across interviewing conditions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trained respondent</th>
<th>Untrained respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiating event</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal response</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempt</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct consequence</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolution</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n = 20 participants in each of the respondents x age cells

Notes

1. Open-ended questions are those questions that elicit an elaborate response without dictating what specific information is required (Powell and Snow, 2007).
2. Not all story grammar elements are equally prevalent in children’s and adult’s narratives. Details describing the lead up to the event or describing what actually happened tend to be included more frequently than the emotional reactions of the characters or the motivations for their actions (Snow et al., 1999; Snow and Powell, 2008).

References


Appendix

Figure A1

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