THE APPLICATION OF BEST-PRACTICE INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS TO AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

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TO WHAT DEGREE DO CURRENT INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS APPLY TO AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL CHILDREN AND HOW CAN THEY BE MODIFIED TO BETTER SUIT THEM?
BEST-PRACTICE CHILD INTERVIEWING

• Rapport building
• Practice narrative
• Ground rules
• Raising the topic of concern
• Questioning (Open-ended)
## COMMUNICATION DIFFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Styles</th>
<th>Aboriginal Culture</th>
<th>Non-Aboriginal Culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Questions</td>
<td>Rare, Intrusive</td>
<td>Common, Polite</td>
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<td>Eye-Contact</td>
<td>Can be Rude, Disrespectful</td>
<td>Confidence, Trustworthy</td>
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<td>Silence</td>
<td>Important, Common</td>
<td>Awkward, Evasive</td>
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<td>Shame</td>
<td>Complex, Encompassing</td>
<td>Guilt/Misdemeanours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stories</td>
<td>Non-Linear, Qualitative</td>
<td>Linear, clock/calendar time</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Timeframes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perceptions of Authority</td>
<td>History= Greater Mistrust</td>
<td>Police/Child Protection=</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of Authority</td>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
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Research regarding differences in communication style between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples + Anecdotal evidence = Suggests current application of interview protocol may not be the most ideal way to interview Aboriginal children
Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) code of ethics for working with Indigenous Australians.
Participants

- Police Detectives
- Senior Aboriginal Community Workers
- Child Protection Workers
- Academics
- Senior Crown Prosecutor
- Psychologist
- Speech Pathologist
- Witness Assistance Service Officer
- Manager of a Child Protection Organisation
**Design:** Qualitative  

**Procedure:** One in-depth, semi-structured interview  

**Analysis:** Thematic analysis, Grounded Theory

The purpose of this interview is to explore how the interviewing of Aboriginal children can be done in a way that is consistent with best practice interviewing procedure, while also considering the child’s cultural background and needs. Please present your views on this issue, providing examples of questioning/interview strategies where possible.
1. RAPPORT BUILDING AND PRACTICE NARRATIVES

2. GROUND RULES AND LANGUAGE

3. QUESTIONING AND INFORMATION GATHERING
RAPPORT BUILDING AND PRACTICE NARRATIVES

1. Incorporation of reciprocity - information sharing
2. Communal relationships - rapport with child, family and community
3. Might waste time and resources - future research needed

“I think it’s a concept of sharing—if you’re going to tell me about you then I have to tell you something about me. You have to reciprocate within Aboriginal culture, that’s a huge element of it. You can’t just expect expect expect expect and not give.”
GROUND RULES AND LANGUAGE

1. Replace ‘if’ with ‘maybe’, ‘might be’ or ‘I might.’
2. Avoid using the word promise
3. Try to use ‘true story’ instead of ‘truth’
4. Avoid terms regarding childhood- especially when interviewing children approaching adolescence

“Because you need to take into consideration like Barkly and Western Desert they all become men at around 12 to 14 years, sometimes even younger. So if you say straight up ‘boy’, you’ve already closed off, because out of respect you wouldn’t call him a boy.”
QUESTIONING AND INFORMATION GATHERING

1. Narrative-based structure of the protocol was supported
2. Shorter and more focused open-ended questions are encouraged
3. Soften direct questions by rephrasing into statements and incorporating more silence

“I think it’s important that people respect that silence while they’re sitting there at the beginning, before they’ve given the disclosure. You’ll have that big blank of silence—be prepared for that with Aboriginal kids because they’re thinking majorly of the consequences of disclosing. I just look at them and nod to let them know that when you’re ready, I’m here.”
CONCLUSIONS

• Particular nouns, questions, sentence structures and the use of silence can be adjusted in protocols to better accommodate the discourse practices in many Aboriginal communities.

• Future research in laboratory and field settings can be conducted to further test some of the concerns raised.

• It is extremely important that Aboriginal children are interviewed according to the best possible and most appropriate techniques.

• Modifications to existing protocols are likely to facilitate communication between interviewers and Aboriginal children.
THANK YOU

Any Questions?