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The Effectiveness of Pre-Interview Training in Helping Preschool Children Overcome Compliance in an Interview Setting

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The Effectiveness of Pre-Interview Training in Helping Preschool Children
Overcome Compliance in an Interview Setting

Jo-Anne Naylor

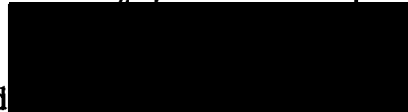
A Report Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Award
of Bachelor of Arts (Psychology) Honours Faculty of Community Studies,
Education and Social Sciences, Edith Cowan University

29th October 2001

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Jo-Anne Naylor

Date 15/3/02

The Effectiveness of Pre-Interview Training in Helping Preschool Children Overcome Compliance in an Interview Setting

Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to investigate whether a pre-interview training package was effective in reducing compliance to misleading questions with pre-school children and if the effects of the pre-interview training package could be generalized to interviewers other than those conducting the pre-interview training. Sixty preschool children, aged between four and five years, were randomly allocated to one of three interview conditions. The first group was given no pre-interview training (control group). In the second group, the same person administered the pre-interview training package and subsequent interview (same interviewer group). In the third group, different people conducted the pre-interview training and subsequent interview. All participants watched a short video as part of a normal class activity. The next day participants were given the pre-interview training (except the control group) and then interviewed about the contents of the video. The interview contained both misleading and non-misleading questions. Responses to the questions were coded as either correct, incorrect or don't know and were analysed using a 3 x 2 (Interview Condition x Question Type) mixed model ANOVA. The hypothesis that children who received the training would make fewer commission errors to misleading questions was supported. Additionally, the hypothesis that the pre-interview training package would not be as effective at reducing commission errors to misleading questions, when someone other than the person giving the training interviewed the child, was also supported. It was concluded that the pre-interview training package is effective for use with preschool children, however its lack of generalisability to other interviewers should be noted in its application. The present study offers guidance for the further refinement of the pre-interview training package. Further replication is needed with a larger sample if the utility of the pre-interview training package is to be thoroughly explored.

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Submitted:	October 2001

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate, without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature: Date: 

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Introduction

Children's Testimony

Children are becoming increasingly involved in the legal system as both witnesses and victims. Within the current legal setting, many questions have been raised about the reliability of the child witness (Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Dale, Loftus & Rathbun, 1978; Yuille, 1988), and as an increasing number of children are testifying in legal cases, the question of their reliability becomes even more relevant (Bruck & Ceci, 1999; Powell & McMeeken, 1998; Yuille, 1988). In addition, as the child is often the victim and the only witness, particularly in sexual abuse cases, it is of paramount importance that their testimony be as accurate as possible.

The credibility of the child witness has been called into question due to a number of factors, one of which is lying. In past cases false claims have been made by children, particularly young children (Bruck & Ceci, 1999). While these false claims may be seen as lying, research has suggested that in many cases false claims have been a result of repeated questioning and suggestive interviews (Bruck & Ceci, 1999). Research also indicates that young children do not lie more than older children or adults (Flin & Spencer, 1995). Young children's lies are generally easier to detect and so it may appear that they lie more frequently.

Unless otherwise specified, the term 'young children' refers to children younger than 7 years old. Ceci and Bruck (1993) and Bruck and Ceci (1999), imply that the term 'young children' refers to preschool

children however some authors include children up to the age of 7 in their definition of 'young children' (Roebbers & Schneider, 2000). Additionally, the age of 'preschool' children is not the same throughout the world.

Memory

A more apposite question is whether children have sufficient memory systems to cope with the interview situation and provide meaningful information (Nurcombe, 1986). While young children's memories have been shown to be quite reliable given optimal conditions, when optimal conditions are not present, children's memories often appear to be weak and easily affected by suggestion. Research has shown that young children's memory systems are not as advanced as that of adults or older children, however given the right environment, young children have performed well on memory tasks compared to older children and adults (Fivush, 1993; Goodman & Schwartz-Kenney, 1992).

Loftus and Davies (1984) maintain that the less original memory a person has for an event, the more susceptible they are to suggestion. They assert that as children have less efficient memory systems than adults, it is reasonable to conclude that they will be more susceptible to suggestion than adults. Suggestibility is thought to occur when information provided by an interviewer is incorporated into testimony even though it was not part of the event.

Powell and McMeeken (1998) comment that children have difficulty remembering specific details of an occurrence when they have been assaulted on a number of occasions, as details from similar events often overlap and are indistinguishable in the child's memory.

While there do appear to be age differences in memory, these age effects appear to be most pronounced with free recall, that is, where the child is given no clues to aid memory (Flin & Spencer, 1995; Dent & Stephenson, 1979). Free recall generally results in a more accurate recollection of information but young children appear to be limited in their capacity for free recall and give brief answers and incomplete detail to open-ended questions (Dent & Stephenson, 1979; Flin & Spencer, 1995; Goodman & Reed, 1986). However, although they provide fewer details of events, children's recall has been found to be just as accurate as that of adults (Yuille, 1988). That is, although children provide less information than adults, the information they do provide is just as accurate.

A study conducted by Ceci, Ross and Toglia (1987) did not support previous findings that children's recall was less accurate than that of adults. Ceci et al. (1987) found a large variation in children's recall and commented that many previous studies have only looked at a very small sample size, often only one child. They believe that the recall of children is equal to that of adults given optimal conditions.

Due to the limitations associated with free recall, direct questioning is often used as an alternative. While direct questioning increases the amount

of information given, it also has the undesired effect of increasing the suggestibility of the child. This effect is further magnified by the fact that the younger the child, the more susceptible they are to suggestibility (Cassel, Roebbers & Bjorklund, 1996; Cohen & Harnick, 1980).

It is clearly not sufficient to simply comment on whether or not children are accurate witnesses, as their performance often depends on many factors and the control of such factors. Bruck and Ceci (1999) believe that the reliability of young children's reports has more to do with the skills of the interviewer than the memory system of the child. Flin and Spencer (1995) also maintain that the testimony of even young children can be accurate if they are carefully interviewed.

Endres, Poggenpohl and Erben (1999) found that suggestibility was brought about by the wording of a question and did not result in changes in memory. Suggestive information was only found to affect children's memory when there was a gap in memory.

Goodman & Schaaf (1997, p. 55) state that "children's abilities are complex; one can focus on the strengths or weaknesses of children's memory to justify a positive or negative view. What is difficult is to find the right balance". That is, children's memory systems are reliant on a number of factors. The interaction of these factors can often determine the accuracy and amount of information given.

A discussion of other factors, besides memory, which affect children's performance in the interview situation follows. How these factors

can be influenced by appropriate interview techniques to obtain the best possible outcomes is also discussed.

Suggestibility and Compliance

Ceci and Bruck (1993) adopt a broad definition of suggestibility and highlight three important components. First, that it is possible to accept information offered by the interviewer and still be aware that it was not part of the observed event. Second, suggestibility can result from information provided before or after the event. Third, suggestibility can be the result of social and/or cognitive factors. As the third component is the focus of this study, it will be discussed in more detail below.

Factors Underlying Suggestibility

Ceci and Bruck (1995) propose several factors that underlie suggestibility in children and suggest that these factors may account for observed age differences.

Cognitive factors

Memory - Children have weaker memory skills than adults and therefore are not able to encode, store, retrieve and monitor information as efficiently as adults. If suggestibility is based on memory then it is easier to override memory with suggestion if the original memory trace is weak. Additionally a child's knowledge base about the world is not as advanced as an adult's, except in certain areas such as cartoons, which also makes them

more prone to suggestion as they are less able to evaluate what is realistic or likely in an event (Ceci & Bruck, 1995).

Language – Children’s language skills may account for their inability to provide complete accounts to open ended questions as they simply do not have the skills to verbalise their experience. Their limited verbal skills may also contribute to their suggestibility in that they may not understand the questions being posed or have the skills to question the interviewer (Ceci & Bruck, 1995).

Social factors

Social factors are seen to contribute to suggestibility as children accept misleading information in order to please the interviewer or because they perceive the interviewer as someone they can trust. Adults have high status in the eyes of children and are often seen as all knowing and truthful (Ceci & Bruck, 1995).

Often children do not have the techniques to overcome the suggestion by the adult which may include saying “I don’t remember” or “I already answered that question”. As adults generally have these techniques they are more able to overcome the suggestive interview. Not only are adults more likely to have these skills but it is seen as more permissible for an adult to challenge an interviewer than for a child (Ceci & Bruck, 1995).

However, it appears that neither cognitive nor social factors alone can account for the effects of suggestion and it is more likely that the two

interact (Ceci & Bruck, 1995). Endres et al. (1999) comment that there is no single explanation that can account for the many situational effects of suggestibility.

Some authors view suggestibility and compliance as two separate and distinct phenomena, while others see them as being intertwined (Roebers & Schneider, 2000). The main difference outlined by Gudjonsson (1990) between suggestibility and compliance is that compliance does not require personal acceptance of the proposition or request. That is, there is a conscious decision to comply. Suggestibility involves the acceptance of the suggestion, thereby involving memory processes to a greater degree (Gudjonsson, 1990). Suggestibility and compliance have been found to be highly correlated and the processes have similar mediating variables such as avoidance coping, eagerness to please and social desirability (Gudjonsson, 1990). However, a level of social awareness needs to be present for both suggestibility and compliance. That is, the person must understand the social rules, such as children listen to adults and do what they say (Gudjonsson, 1990).

An example of a mediating variable is perceived authority (Ceci et al., 1987). That is, suggestion is thought to be more easily accepted if the person offering the suggestion is perceived as an authority figure. People are taught from infancy to obey authority figures and that obedience is necessary to function in society (Meyer, 1997). Children view adults as authority figures and as more knowledgeable than themselves. Children may subsequently try

to please the interviewer by giving them the answer they believe the interviewer wants. Ceci et al. (1987) reported that when children were questioned by a 7-year-old they were less vulnerable to suggestion than when interviewed by an adult, suggesting that compliance to authority was a strong mediating variable. This indicates that the level of compliance experienced effected the degree to which suggestion impacted testimony.

Children's awareness of adults as authority figures can be even more pronounced in the legal setting. The low accuracy of children's accounts under cross examination is seen to stem from their desire to conform to the requests of the adult interviewing them (Luus & Wells, 1992). This conformity has also been labeled compliance (Gee & Pipe, 1995).

Therefore, suggestibility is not seen to be a stable feature of childhood but rather can be influenced by many factors such as the circumstances of the interview (Goodman & Schwartz-Kenney, 1992). It is possible that effective training procedures can increase resistance to compliance and suggestion. For example, if intimidation can be reduced, suggestibility may also be reduced. This intimidation does not have to be real but rather simply perceived by the child (Goodman and Schwartz-Kenney, 1992).

As mentioned, children's perception of what the adult is looking for or the purpose of the interview also affects their level of compliance or accuracy. If the child perceives that the adult just wants to know what happened then compliance may be reduced. On the other hand, if children perceive that adults want them to answer in a particular way then they may

give more inaccurate answers and when unsure of answers, accept the adult's prompts (Meyer, 1997). With so many influencing factors, it is difficult for a child to overcome the habit of obedience which leads to compliance (Meyer, 1997).

Effect of Suggestion on Memory

Bruck and Ceci (1999) raise the question of whether the effect of suggestive interviewing on children is the result of the child's social compliance to the perceived intent of the interviewer or whether the suggestive technique fundamentally alters the memory of the event for the child. Bruck and Ceci (1999) believe that the suggestibility of the child is socially motivated. That is, as part of their socialisation, children become compliant, very trusting of adults and willing to please them. This trust leads children to see adults as honest and cooperative, leaving them open to suggestion. Hughes and Grieve (1980) demonstrated this in a study where children were asked nonsensical questions such as "Is red heavier than yellow?". Children provided answers to these questions by adults regardless of how bizarre the questions.

Studies by Cassel et al. (1996) and Cohen and Harnick (1980) showed young children to be more prone to suggestion than older children and adults, however when later interviewed by a free recall technique, the suggestive questioning was found to have no more effect on the young children's accurate memory of the event. That is, the increased effects of

suggestion on the child were only temporary and did not result in long term changes in memory.

Further, studies by Huffman et al. (1996, cited in Bruck & Ceci, 1999) and Poole and Lindsay (1995) showed the effects of suggestive techniques to only have a temporary effect on memory. That is, the false memories brought about by suggestive techniques, faded with time without affecting the accuracy of the retained information. These studies suggest that children's responses were socially motivated rather than a result of altered memory.

Types of Questions

Poole and Lindsay (1995) found that children's performance in free recall is limited but when accuracy is the primary concern, then free recall is the most effective interview technique. They found that less detail was provided by the free recall of 3 and 4-year-olds compared to 5-7 year olds. Additionally, the number of correct points in free recall significantly diminished over time for the younger age group (Poole & Lindsay, 1995). It was also found that children were willing to answer questions about events that were not experienced. Their willingness to answer questions about non experienced events was not just limited to peripheral events (Poole & Lindsay, 1995).

Children have been found to make more omission than commission errors in free recall (Saywitz, Goodman, Nicholas & Moan, 1991). An

omission error is where witnesses fail to include information in their report while a commission error occurs where witnesses include false events in their report. Children are more likely to make commission errors with misleading questions (Gee, Gregory & Pipe, 1999). That is, children provide additional information that is not part of the observed event.

As young children have difficulty with free recall, which often results in brief and incomplete accounts, recognition questions are more often used as an alternative in the interview setting (Nurcombe, 1986). Recognition questions place less cognitive demands on young children, therefore such questions are likely to derive more information (Nurcombe, 1986) even though it is well known that these forms of questions increase suggestibility and reduce accuracy (White, Leichtman & Ceci, 1997). Consequently, within legal settings, leading and misleading questions are used extensively (Goodman, 1984a; Gee & Pipe, 1995).

Misleading questions can be particularly problematic in interviews with children. Roebbers and Schneider (2000) found that misleading questions impact on testimony in two ways. First, witnesses comply with the interviewer's suggestion at the time the question is asked and answer in a way they perceive to be correct or in accordance with the perceived intent of the interviewer. Second, witnesses incorporate the misleading information into later testimony. The first impact can be seen as compliance and the second as suggestibility (Gee & Pipe, 1995). Others suggest that the misleading information can be incorporated instantaneously into memory. It

is difficult to separate the two. For example, Cassell et al. (1996) found that it was not the misleading repeated questioning that caused children to alter their recollections but the social demands of the interview situation. That is, in their attempt to be compliant children agree with information they perceive adults want to hear.

Suggestibility is not unique to children. Adults have also been found to be highly suggestible under certain conditions. Warnick and Sanders (1980) studied adult witnesses and concluded that more accurate answers would be given if an emphasis was placed on not giving information or saying “don’t know” when it was appropriate. Children have the added pressure of overcoming social forces identified as inducing compliance, such as the power and status of the adult interviewer, as previously discussed (Baxter, 1990).

Pratt (1990) found that adults and children answered bizarre questions to the same extent even though they could recognise and identify that the questions did not make sense, suggesting that both adults and children were influenced by social demands. While these social factors also impact on adult witnesses (Warnick & Sanders, 1980), they are especially pertinent for children (Baxter, 1990).

Poole and Lindsay (1995) conclude that it is difficult to enhance the amount of information offered by young children by using free recall alone. They go on to argue that interview procedures need to be modified to minimise linguistic confusions such as the child’s perceived need to offer an

answer to an adult regardless of the question asked. They suggest that one way of achieving this is to reiterate the appropriateness of saying “I don’t know” (Poole & Lindsay, 1995).

Effect of Age

Only a small number of previous studies have involved preschool children despite the fact that this group makes up a significant percentage of the children involved in sexual abuse cases (Bruck & Ceci, 1999).

In a review of the literature conducted by Ceci and Bruck (1993), they found that of the studies comparing preschool children to older children or adults, preschoolers were found to be the most suggestive in 88% of the studies.

Ornstein, Gordon and Larus (1992) found that 3 year old children agreed with misleading questions twice as often as 6 year olds. Gee and Pipe (1995) found that young children were more likely to be compliant with misleading questions and also more likely to give an incorrect response than admit they didn’t know. Ceci and Bruck (1993) proposed that children are often compliant to misleading questions posed by adults, as they perceive adults to be co-operative conversationalists who ask honest and logical questions that must have an answer.

Greenstock and Pipe (1997) found that when questioned with both misleading and strongly misleading questions, younger children (5-7 year olds) had more difficulty giving accurate answers to the strongly misleading

questions, whereas the older group (8-10 year olds) were equally affected by the misleading and strongly misleading questions. This also suggests that the wording of the question had an effect on the answers that the children gave and their level of suggestibility.

In their study involving 5-64 year olds, Roebbers and Schneider (2000) found that the overall level of information in recognition was higher than in cued recall, suggesting that recognition questions derived more information from all age groups. Children under the age of seven were found to be disproportionately vulnerable to misleading questions, which affected their accuracy. Roebbers and Schneider (2000) concluded that non suggestive questioning techniques are needed for witnesses of all ages.

Non suggestive interview techniques put less social pressure on the child thereby reducing their level of compliance (Roebbers & Schneider, 2000). Although adults are negatively affected by suggestive techniques they are better able to resist the social pressure of the interview situation and decide between their own memory for the event and the suggested answer offered.

Davies, Tarrant and Flin (1989) found that the younger children in their study were more likely to make a false positive error (commission error) in a line up identification. That is, if the target person was absent, they would still choose someone. This was thought to occur because the child perceived that the task required them to choose someone regardless of whether the right person was present. To overcome this Davies et al. (1989)

included a Mr Nobody so the child could still choose someone and satisfy what they perceived the task requirement to be.

Shrimpton, Oates and Hayes (1998) also found that younger children (4-5 years) were more vulnerable to misleading questions than older children. They also found that overall children's recall for stressful events was just as good as their recall for non stressful events. This lends support to the argument that an event similar to a real life event does not need to be used in studies.

Ornstein et al. (1992) found that in interviewing 3-6 year olds after a visit to the doctor, it was necessary to rely on yes-no questions and specific probes for the younger children, as their recall was limited.

Research indicates that errors in children's testimony are most often associated with the form of questions used. Children have been found to be 80% accurate in free recall regardless of age (Yuille, 1988). While free recall is clearly the way to obtain accurate information, the question remains as to whether enough information can be provided by children to make their testimony valuable.

Many believe that more attention should be paid to the questioning techniques used with children (Flin, Bull, Boon & Knox, 1992). There is no reason to believe that improving techniques to maximize the accuracy and completeness of a child's testimony should threaten the rights of the accused (Flin et al., 1992).

Powell and McMeeken (1998) believe that one way of reducing the effect of compliance is by minimising the number of specific questions asked and inform the child that “don’t know” is an acceptable response. However, as has been discussed, minimising specific questioning can also work to reduce the amount of information offered by children, particularly young children.

Interview Techniques

Questioning techniques that have been shown to compromise the accuracy of a child’s testimony are regularly used by courts (Pipe & Henaghan, 1996), particularly in the cross examination of witnesses. Leading questions are used to focus the child and obtain meaningful testimony even though the suggestive effects of these types of questions have been well established (Pipe & Henaghan, 1996). This often means that there is a poor fit between the child and the way questioning currently occurs in the legal system (Pipe & Henaghan, 1996).

The ways in which to question children could be seen as a pivotal issue in attempts to combat abuse. That is, in order for justice to be served, the most accurate information needs to be obtained (Bottoms & Goodman, 1996).

Those relying on the evidence provided by children cannot be satisfied with the lack of completeness brought about by techniques such as free recall. Free recall often results in children deliberately or inadvertently

omitting details which actually occurred. If these details are not consolidated in their testimony, over time they may be forgotten by the child. Therefore, specific questioning has a role to play in filling out incomplete reports (Dent & Stephenson, 1979).

Dent and Stephenson (1979) studied the accuracy of recall for 10 and 11 year olds under the three conditions of free report, general questions and specific questions. Free recall was found to be highly accurate but incomplete. Dent and Stephenson (1979) found that children who were interviewed by free recall gave fewer correct details than those interviewed with general questions and those interviewed with general questions gave fewer specific details than those interviewed with specific questions. However, specific questioning also increased incorrect points recalled. A study by Peterson and Bell (1996) showed 91% accuracy in responses to free recall compared to 41% accuracy in response to specific questioning. There is a need to examine the structure of the interview and to train those responsible for questioning child witnesses (Dent & Stephenson, 1979; Saywitz et al., 1991).

Forced choice questions affect reliability because if the correct option is not available, children are unlikely to provide an "I don't know" answer (Walker, Lunning & Eilts, 1996, cited in Bruck & Ceci, 1999). Rather, the child will choose one of the available options in an attempt to make their answer consistent with what they perceive the intent of the interviewer to be rather than challenge the interviewer who they perceive as truthful and not

answers to misleading questions. A warm supportive environment can also be obtained through building rapport with the child.

Pre-Interview Training

“The need to improve the interviewing and assessment of children’s evidence is critical. We have finally reached the stage of providing an atmosphere in which children can find support to reveal their abuse by adults. However, if we continue to interview children in a sloppy or even damaging fashion, we risk losing the gains that have been made with respect to children’s disclosures” (Yuille, 1988, p.259).

One important question then is how to maximize the information a child gives in evidence without compromising the accuracy of that information. In other words how do we reduce suggestibility and compliance so that techniques such as direct questioning can be used to optimise information and minimise inaccuracy. Many reforms are already being made in Australia, however there is a call for the legal system to be further adapted to accommodate the child witness without compromising the rights of the accused (Myers, 1996; Pipe & Henaghan, 1996).

Due to our common law system in Australia, witnesses may be cross examined and cross examination involves the use of leading or suggestive questions (Dent & Stephenson, 1979). While cross examination is highly valued by lawyers, such a system can be hostile to the child witness (Myers, 1996). Thus, there is a need for children to be better prepared for testifying in a court room.

When the suggestibility of children for a live event versus a recorded event was tested by King (1984, cited in Yuille, 1988) children were found to be more susceptible to suggestion for the recorded event. A live event may be thought to be more 'true to life' and more closely resembling an event a witness is called to give evidence on. While some may argue that only live events should be used in research to reduce suggestibility, it could be argued that if the suggestibility of children in an interview setting can be reduced for a recorded event (e.g. a video) it is more likely that these findings can be generalized to a live event where children are less susceptible to suggestion. According to King 1984, cited in Yuille, 1988) using a video as the event optimizes the conditions in which a child is susceptible to suggestion.

Lipton (1977) believed that using a film as opposed to a live event was preferable as it could be controlled, it had mundane realism and the experimenter could assess all aspects of the event and replicate identically. On the other hand Davies et al. (1989) believe it is necessary to use an event more like the actual crime such as a visit to the doctor, which involves bodily contact. They believe that a video may underestimate a child's performance. However, it could be argued that if a child's performance can be improved using a video as the stimulus then it is more likely to work with a live event.

To try to clarify these issues, the current study will examine the effects of the pre-interview training package used by Gee et al. (1999) on

preschool children and if any effects are obtained whether these effects can be generalized to interviewers other than those conducting the pre-interview training.

It is hypothesized that the training will reduce the compliance of preschool children to misleading questions, as these children are particularly prone to the effects of suggestion due to their age and the social pressures they experience. That is, children who receive pre-interview training will make fewer commission errors to misleading questions than children who do not receive the training. It is further hypothesized that, as rapport building is one of the effects of pre-interview training, the pre-interview training package will not be as effective at reducing compliance to misleading questions when someone other than the person who administers the training interviews the child. That is, when the pre-interview training is administered by someone other than the person conducting the interview, the reduction in commission errors to misleading questions will not be as great.

For the misleading forced choice questions, neither option was correct and for the non-misleading forced choice questions one of the options was correct. These were the same types of questions used by Gee et al. (1999). The questionnaire can be found at Appendix E. Each child received six two alternative forced choice questions, six open specification questions and six yes/no questions (three each of misleading and non-misleading). Thus each participant was asked a total of 18 questions. As in Gee et al. (1999), the order of the questions was alternated between the six different forms to control for order effects. The order of the forced choice options was alternated across participants, to further control for order effects as in Gee et al., 1999). The pre-interview training package was similar to that used by Gee et al. (1999) involving instructions not to guess and reassurance that the child could correct the interviewer. A set of practice questions was included, which required the participant to give “don’t know” responses or to correct an incorrect assumption. The practice questions followed the same format as questions used in the questionnaire. The pre-interview training package can be found at Appendix F.

Procedure

Participants watched the same video as part of a general class activity. In all, six classes participated. Participants who returned a signed parental consent document were randomly allocated to three groups by the experimenter on return of the consent forms. Each child was interviewed

individually the day after they watch the video. Participants who could not be interviewed the next day were excluded from the study. Participants in the control group were given no pre-interview training. Participants in the same interviewer group were given pre-interview training and then interviewed by the same person. Participants in the different interviewer group were given pre-interview training and then interviewed by a different person. The person conducting the pre-interview training was the same for each group and a second interviewer was used for the 'different' group.

Before the pre-training or interview began, participants were reminded that they would be asked questions about the video they had seen the day before. They were then told that if they no longer wanted to answer the questions that they could go back to class. Each participant was then asked for their verbal consent before the training or pre-interview commenced.

The pre-interview training session was similar to that used by Gee et al. (1999). Children were told that sometimes they might not know the answer or there might not be an answer and when this happens, they should tell the person interviewing them. Children were told that the interviewer did not want them to guess the answer or make up any answers. Children were then given practice questions which required them to correct the interviewer or give a 'don't know' response. The pre-interview training package can be found in Appendix F. If the child attempted to guess, the

trainer questioned their response, reminded them that guesses were to be avoided and asked the question again.

As pointed out by Gee et al. (1999), in order to control for an overuse of ‘don’t know’ responses, the trainer told the group that they would know the answer to some of the questions and they didn’t have to say “don’t know” if they knew the answer. Following this, the trainer gave example questions such as “what is your name” to allow the participant to practice giving the correct answer. The training session concluded with the trainer reminding the child of the three response options: tell the interviewer the answer, say “don’t know”, or correct the interviewer. Throughout the pre-interview training the interviewer praised the participants for giving correct responses. The interview was then conducted by one of the two interviewers. Children who did not receive the pre-interview training were engaged in a short dialogue before the interview started. This dialogue included questions about their family, pets and school. Each interviewer interviewed 30 children and each interview lasted approximately ten minutes. At the conclusion of the interview, each child was thanked for their participation and given a sticker.

The answers were coded as “don’t know”, “correct” or “incorrect”. For all question forms “don’t know” responses were coded as such. For example, for the misleading forced choice question “Was the monkey brown or orange?”, don’t know was coded as don’t know, a choice of the two options was incorrect and saying “neither” or giving the correct response (the

monkey was blue) was coded as correct. For open specification misleading, if the child corrected the interviewer, the answer was coded as correct. If the participant provided incorrect information, the answer was coded as incorrect. For open specification non-misleading the correct answer was coded as correct and an incorrect answer was coded as incorrect. For forced choice misleading the correct answer or correcting the interviewer was coded as correct and a choice of the two alternatives was coded as incorrect. For forced choice non-misleading questions, the answer was simply coded as correct or incorrect depending on the choice of the two alternatives. For yes/no questions the answers were simply coded as correct or incorrect. Raw data can be found at Appendix G.

107.54, $p = .000$, with a greater number of correct responses for non-misleading questions than misleading questions ($M = 5.27$ versus $M = 2.43$).

The main effect for condition was not significant, $F(2,57) = .98$, $p = .383$, and there was no significant interaction, $F(2,57) = 2.12$, $p = .129$.

Refer to Figure 1.

Incorrect

A mixed model 3 x 2 ANOVA was conducted to examine whether interview condition (control/same/different) and question type (misleading/non-misleading) had an effect on the number of incorrect responses. The main effect of question type was significant $F(1,57) = 118.81$, $p = .000$, with a greater number of incorrect responses for misleading questions than non-misleading questions ($M = 5.68$ versus $M = 3.02$). There was no significant main effect of condition, although this was close to reaching the significance level, $F(2,57) = 3.13$, $p = .051$. There was a significant interaction between condition and question type, $F(2,57) = 5.38$, $p = .007$. See Table 1 for means and standard deviations and Figure 2 for the main effect and interaction.

Post hoc comparisons (independent t tests) using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha of 0.016 were used to test the simple main effects of condition. These indicated that the control group gave significantly more incorrect responses to misleading questions than the same interviewer group, $t(38) = 3.11$, $p = .004$. The mean number of incorrect responses to

Table 1
Mean number of responses (and standard deviations) by interview condition and question type

		Non-Misleading		Misleading	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Control	Correct	5.20	1.40	2.10	1.86
	Errors	3.35	1.35	6.40	1.82
	Don't Know	0.45	0.76	0.50	1.05
Same	Correct	5.25	1.89	3.20	2.24
	Errors	2.90	1.71	4.45	2.14
	Don't Know	0.85	1.27	1.35	1.57
Different	Correct	5.35	1.66	2.00	1.72
	Errors	2.80	1.47	6.20	2.24
	Don't Know	0.85	1.09	0.80	1.28

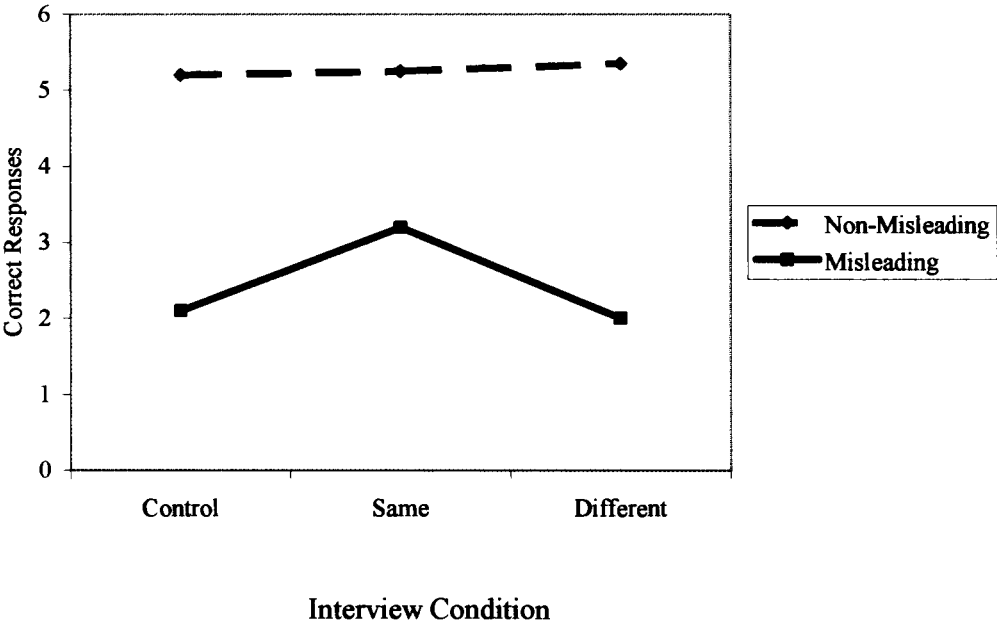


Figure 1. Mean Number of Correct Responses as a Function of Interview Condition and Question Type

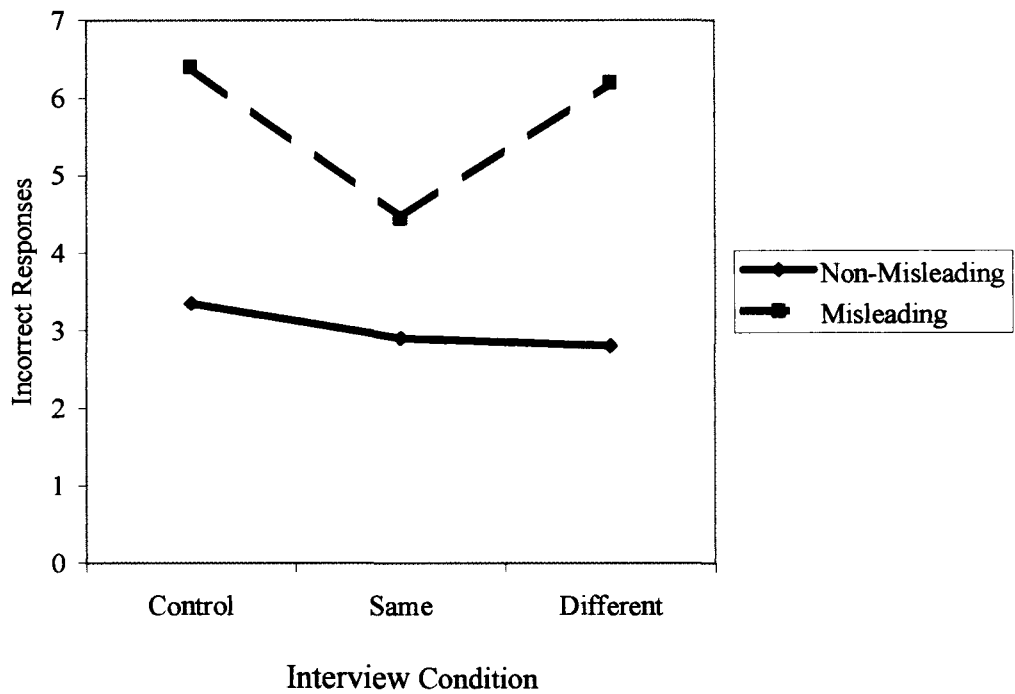


Figure 2. Mean Number of Incorrect Responses as a Function of Interview Condition and Question Type

misleading questions was 6.40 ($SD = 1.82$) for the control group and 4.45 ($SD = 2.14$) for the same interviewer group. For the non-misleading questions there was no significant difference between the number of incorrect responses for the control and same interviewer group $t(38) = .925$, $p = .362$.

There was no significant difference in the number of incorrect responses between the same and different interviewer groups for misleading questions although this was close to reaching significance at an alpha level of 0.016, $t(38) = -2.53$, $p = .016$. The mean number of incorrect responses to misleading questions was 4.45 ($SD = 2.14$) for the same interviewer group and 6.20 ($SD = 2.24$) for the different interviewer group. No significant difference was found in the number of incorrect responses between the same and different interviewer group for non-misleading questions, $t(38) = 0.20$, $p = 0.84$.

There was no significant difference in the number of incorrect responses between the control and different groups for misleading questions, $t(38) = .31$, $p = .758$, or non-misleading questions, $t(38) = 1.23$, $p = .226$.

Independent t -tests with an adjusted alpha of 0.016 were also conducted to examine the simple main effects of question type. There was a significant difference in the number of incorrect responses between misleading and non-misleading questions for the control group, $t(19) = 7.27$, $p = 0.000$. The mean number of incorrect responses was 6.40 ($SD = 1.82$) for misleading questions and 3.35 ($SD = 1.35$) for non-misleading questions.

.194, or condition, $F(2,57) = 1.65, p = .201$, and there was no significant interaction, $F(2,57) = 1.78, p = .177$. Refer to Figure 3.

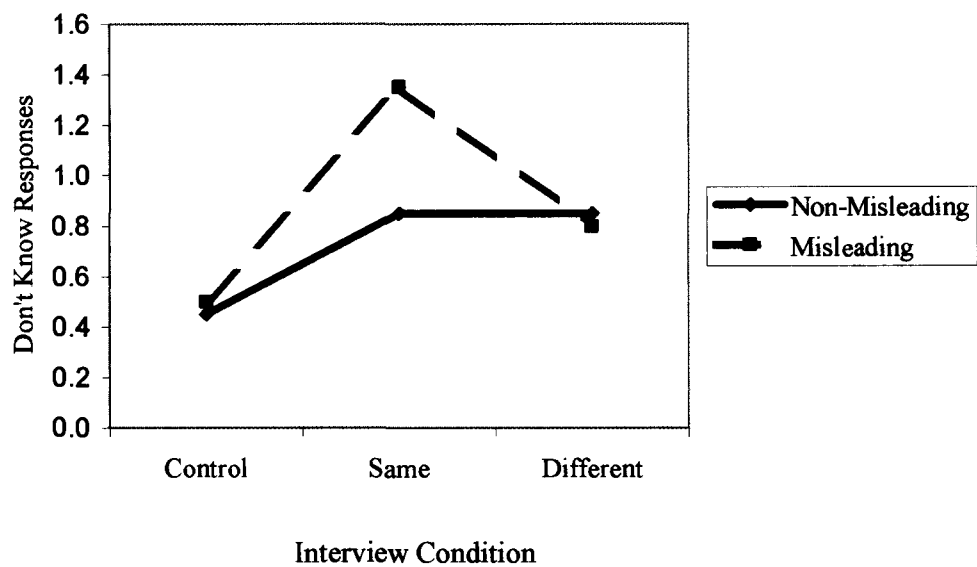


Figure 3. Mean number of Don't Know Responses as a Function of Interview Condition and Question Type

Discussion

The results of this study supported the hypothesis that pre-interview training would reduce commission errors to misleading questions in preschool children. The hypothesis that the interview package would not be as effective at reducing commission errors when the interview was conducted by someone other than the person giving the training was also supported.

Although the difference in incorrect responses between the same and different interviewer groups ($p = .016$) was not significant at an alpha level of .016, the level of significance suggests, it could be reasonably concluded that if this study was repeated, a significant difference would be found between these two groups.

Further, there was no significant difference in the number of incorrect responses to misleading questions between the control and different interviewer groups. That is, when different people administered the training and subsequent interview, the results for the training condition were no different to the control group who received no training. Therefore, the training package was useful in reducing commission errors to misleading questions in preschool children but only when the same person administered both the pre-interview training and subsequent interview.

These results are consistent with Gee et al. (1999), who found that the pre-interview training package reduced the number of commission errors to

misleading questions in 9-13 year olds. However, Gee et al. (1999) did not investigate the effects of using a different interviewer so the findings in this study are unique.

Gee et al. (1999) also found that the effects of the training package were markedly different for misleading and non-misleading questions and that the training did not improve responses to non-misleading questions unlike the package used by Saywitz and Moan Hardie (1994, cited in Gee et al., 1999), which the training was based on. These results are also consistent with the Gee et al. (1999) study, as the training appeared to have no significant effect on responses to non-misleading questions in any of the conditions.

As stated by Gee et al. (1999) the effects found in their study and once again in this study with younger children, may explain the contradictory findings of previous studies. That is, why some studies have found training to be effective at reducing compliance (Warren et al., 1991) and others have not (Moston, 1987, cited in Gee et al., 1999). Warren et al. (1991) used only misleading questions so the effects of the training, as supported by this study would have been even greater. Moston (1987) used both misleading and non-misleading questions but did not differentiate between the two in the analysis, therefore the effects may have been more difficult to pick up. Memon and Vartoukian (1996) further highlight the advantages of training, as they used only an abstract warning rather than an

misleading questions to a greater degree than those interviewed by a different person rather than the person who had built rapport with the child. The positive effects of rapport building in insulating children against suggestive interviews, has been well documented (Goodman et al., 1991; Powell & Thomson, 1994). Additionally, Bjorklund et al. (2000), found that having a more familiar interviewer decreased the number of errors in suggestive interviews with children. It appears that the short pre-interview training package used in this study was enough to build rapport with the child and for them to gain a level of familiarity with the interviewer that worked to decrease the social demand characteristics of the suggestive interview. However, as the children had not had the opportunity to build rapport with the different interviewer the effects of the training were not carried through, therefore the children in the different interviewer condition did not show the same effects of the training in reducing compliance to misleading questions.

Roebers and Schneider (2000) found that when adults and children were given the option of saying "I don't know" adults used this option more frequently while children gave more incorrect answers to these questions. Roebers and Schneider (2000) concluded that adults were more able to assess the intent of the interview situation and distinguish between their own memory and the suggested answer. That is, they were more easily able to discern that the question was misleading and therefore draw on their memory rather than giving in to the social pressure to answer in the way they

perceived the interviewer intended for them to answer. Even with the training, this proved to be a challenge for some children. It is possible that children of this age still do not have the language and conversational skills to adequately verbalise their understanding of the questions being asked (Ceci & Bruck, 1995).

Children's memory for the event appeared to be quite good with children answering a mean of five out of the nine non-misleading questions correctly. There was also no significant difference in the accuracy of responses to non-misleading questions between any of the groups. This indicates that the children remembered the events from the video, they were just not able to overcome the misleading questions and social demands to comply without the optimal training and interview conditions.

The training did not affect the number of correct responses or the rate of responding "I don't know". That is, the training did not reduce the likelihood of children giving the correct response if they knew it. It is encouraging that the training did not increase the overuse of "I don't know" responses which could possibly decrease the number of correct responses. Rather, correct responses remained constant and incorrect responses were decreased. A more encouraging result would be for the training package to also increase the number of correct responses to misleading and non-misleading questions. One explanation for this apparent ceiling effect is that children are already giving their maximum number of correct responses and any further deficiencies are memory related. Future research could examine

ways to modify the training package to increase response accuracy to both misleading and non-misleading questions.

The lack of significant difference between the groups for the “I don’t know” response may suggest that children were more likely to correct the interviewer or give the correct response when faced with a misleading question, than simply say, “I don’t know”. This is also a promising finding as one of the main concerns of using such a package is that it may encourage the overuse of the “I don’t know” response, resulting in reduced accuracy (Gee et al., 1999).

The Gee et al. (1999) study used a live interactive event while the current study used a video as the stimulus. Debate surrounds the issue of whether the effects found with a video as the stimulus can be generalized to a live event so it is encouraging that the different modes of stimulus did not appear to affect the outcome of the training package (Lipton, 1977; King, 1984, cited in Yuille, 1988; Hayes & Delamothe, 1997).

As stated, future research could look at how to ensure that the effects of the training package can be generalized across interviewers. It may be that each new person who interviews the child needs to give the training or it may be enough for them to provide simple reminders to the child of the training they received, indicating to the child that the same rules still apply with them in regard to saying ‘I don’t know’ or correcting the interviewer.

In this study, the ‘different’ interviewer did not discuss the training with the child and although the child was told they would be interviewed by

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Appendix A

Letter to School Principal

Edith Cowan University
Joondalup, Western Australia
School of Psychology
Phone: 9400 5551

Dear Principal

My name is Jo-Anne Lewin and I am currently completing my Honours degree in Psychology at Edith Cowan University in Joondalup. I am writing to request permission to conduct a study in your school. The study is designed to investigate the best ways to help children give accurate answers to various forms of questions. I believe that this information will be useful to people who must interview children in legal, medical and similar settings. The School of Psychology's Ethics Committee has approved this study.

The study involves children between the ages of four and five years. The study will run over a two day period. On the first day it will involve the children watching an age appropriate video, which will run for approximately fifteen minutes. The next day, each child will be asked questions about what they can remember from the video. Each interview will take approximately ten minutes. The study has been designed to be a fun activity for the children and will take place at the school.

The participation of each child is completely voluntary and written consent will be obtained from their parent or guardian before they are allowed to participate. I will provide the class teachers with information forms and permission slips for each child to take home. Please find a copy of these documents attached. Parents will also be able to contact me should they have any further questions.

The information obtained from each child will be completely confidential and individual children will not be identifiable through the data obtained. I will provide a summary of the outcomes of the study at the end of the year. However, any data obtained during the study will remain the property of the University. This is to ensure that confidentiality is maintained.

I will call you on Monday 18 June to ascertain if I have your approval to go ahead with this study in your school. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study or would like any more information, please contact me on 9229 1546 or Dr Alfred Allan (Honours Supervisor) on 9400 5536. Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Jo-Anne Lewin
Honours Student
11 June 2001

Appendix C

Consent Document

Dear Jo-Anne

I have read the information sheet and give permission for
..... (child’s name) to participate in your study on (date of
data collection to be inserted by researcher). I have explained to my child that they
may stop the interview at any time and withdraw from the study if they wish. I
have also explained to my child that his/her participation is voluntary and he/she
agrees to participate.

My child isyears.....months.

.....
Signature of parent/guardian Date

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM TO YOUR CHILD’S TEACHER BY
(DATE).**

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions

1. How did the mole get into the zoo?

Answer _____

2. Was the monkey orange or brown?

Answer _____

3. Did the mole fall into the water?

Answer _____

4. What colour were the snakes?

Answer _____

5. Did the lion have a sore paw or a sore tooth?

Answer _____

6. Did you see the giraffe?

Answer _____

7. Who's tail did the mole swing on?

Answer _____

15. Did the baby birds chase the mole?

Answer

16. What was the monkey eating?

Answer

17. Who pulled the mole out of the water - the bird or the turtle?

Answer

18. Did the mole climb the tree?

Answer

other than don't know ask them if they are guessing and reiterate the importance of answering don't know. Then repeat the question.

Practice Questions – Neither

Sometimes I might ask you a silly question where both of the answers are completely wrong. If this happens I want you to say they are both wrong. So if I asked you –

1. Am I wearing sandals or sneakers?

sandals sneakers

If the child says you are wearing neither praise them and emphasise how sometimes both answers will be completely wrong. If the child attempts to answer ask them if you are really wearing that type of shoe, emphasise the importance of not guessing and repeat the question.

2. Is my top orange or purple?

orange purple

If the child says neither (interviewer will be wearing neither of these colours) praise them and emphasise how sometimes both answers will be completely wrong. If the child attempts to answer ask them what colour the jumper really is, emphasise the importance of not guessing and repeat the question.

Practice Questions – No Answer

Sometime I (Tina) might ask you a really silly question where there is no answer. If this happens I want you to tell me that there's no answer. So if I asked you –

1. What colour is your pet dinosaur?

If the child says there is no answer praise them and emphasise that of course it's a silly question because they don't have a pet dinosaur. If the child attempts to

answer reiterate the “no answer” option and repeat the question.

2. What colour hat am I wearing?

If the child says there is no answer praise them and emphasise that of course it’s a silly question because you’re not wearing a hat. If the child attempts to answer, reiterate the “no answer” option and repeat the question.

Practice Questions – Correct Answer

Sometimes I might ask you a question where one of the answers is definitely right or you do know the answer. If this happens I want you to tell me the right answer. So if I asked you –

1. What is the name of your school?

Eden Hill Primary School (School One)	Bassendean Primary School
Good Shepherd Catholic Primary School (School Two)	Eden Hill Primary School

If the child answers with the correct school praise them and emphasise that they will know some of the answers. If the child answers with the wrong answer or say’s ‘don’t know’, emphasise they will be able to answer some of the questions and repeat the question.

2. What is your name?

If the child answers with their name praise them and emphasise that they will know some of the answers. If the child say’s ‘don’t know’, emphasise they will know some of the answers and repeat the question.

Okay, you did really well in those practice questions. So remember that sometimes you won’t know the answer so say you don’t know, sometimes both answers will be completely wrong or there won’t be an answer and I want you to say when this

happens. Don't forget that you will be able to answer some of the questions.

Okay, are you ready to start?

Pre-Interview Questions – Control Group

Remember yesterday we saw a video about a mole in the zoo. If it's okay with you I'm going to ask you a few questions about the video. This will only take a little while and no one else will hear your answers. It's not a test. I just want you to give me the best answers you can. If you want to go back to class you just tell me and we'll stop. Does that sound okay? Let's start off with some easy questions about you first.

Practice Questions – Control Group

1. What was the best thing you did in the school holidays?
2. Have you got any brothers and sisters?
3. Have you got any pets?
4. What's your favourite TV show?
5. What's your favourite food?
6. What do you like to do after school?

Okay, that's really good. Are you ready to start?

Appendix G

Raw Data: Responses to Misleading and Non-misleading Questions

	ID	Total Correct	Total Incorrect	Total Don't Know	Total
		Misleading	Misleading	Misleading	
Control	1	0	9	0	9
	2	1	8	0	9
	3	3	6	0	9
	4	0	9	0	9
	5	1	8	0	9
	6	1	6	2	9
	7	1	6	2	9
	8	0	5	4	9
	9	4	5	0	9
	10	3	6	0	9
	11	3	6	0	9
	12	4	4	1	9
	13	4	5	0	9
	14	4	5	0	9
	15	2	7	0	9
	16	1	7	1	9
	17	0	9	0	9
	18	2	7	0	9
	19	1	8	0	9
	20	7	2	0	9
Same	21	6	3	0	9
	22	0	9	0	9
	23	2	6	1	9
	24	0	7	2	9
	25	0	3	6	9
	26	5	4	0	9
	27	6	3	0	9
	28	6	2	1	9
	29	7	2	0	9
	30	1	8	0	9
	31	3	5	1	9
	32	6	2	1	9
	33	3	2	4	9
	34	4	2	3	9
	35	3	4	2	9
	36	4	5	0	9
	37	2	5	2	9
	38	2	5	2	9
	39	1	7	1	9
	40	3	5	1	9
	41	0	9	0	9
	42	7	2	0	9
	43	2	7	0	9
	44	1	8	0	9
	45	3	5	1	9
	46	3	6	0	9
	47	4	3	2	9
	48	0	9	0	9

	ID	Total Correct	Total Incorrect	Total Don't Know	Total
		Misleading	Misleading	Misleading	
Different	49	1	5	3	9
	50	0	9	0	9
	51	2	7	0	9
	52	3	6	0	9
	53	4	3	2	9
	54	3	3	3	9
	55	1	7	1	9
	56	1	8	0	9
	57	1	8	0	9
	58	1	4	4	9
	59	2	7	0	9
	60	1	8	0	9
	Total	146	341	53	540

	ID	Total Correct Non Misleading	Total Incorrect Non Misleading	Total Don't Know Non Misleading	Total
Control	1	4	4	1	9
	2	6	3	0	9
	3	4	5	0	9
	4	7	2	0	9
	5	4	5	0	9
	6	7	2	0	9
	7	5	4	0	9
	8	4	2	3	9
	9	6	3	0	9
	10	5	3	1	9
	11	8	1	0	9
	12	3	5	1	9
	13	6	3	0	9
	14	5	4	0	9
	15	4	4	1	9
	16	5	3	1	9
	17	5	4	0	9
	18	6	3	0	9
	19	3	6	0	9
	20	7	1	1	9
Same	21	4	2	3	9
	22	6	3	0	9
	23	3	6	0	9
	24	6	3	0	9
	25	4	1	4	9
	26	6	3	0	9
	27	3	5	1	9
	28	8	1	0	9
	29	9	0	0	9
	30	3	6	0	9
	31	3	6	0	9
	32	7	2	0	9
	33	3	3	3	9
	34	4	3	2	9
	35	4	3	2	9
	36	6	3	0	9
	37	6	2	1	9
	38	6	2	1	9
	39	6	3	0	9
	40	8	1	0	9
	41	5	3	1	9
	42	8	1	0	9
	43	2	6	1	9
	44	4	5	0	9
	45	4	3	2	9
	46	5	4	0	9
	47	4	3	2	9
	48	5	4	0	9

	ID	Total Correct Non Misleading	Total Incorrect Non Misleading	Total Don't Know Non Misleading	Total
Different	49	4	1	4	9
	50	5	3	1	9
	51	6	3	0	9
	52	8	1	0	9
	53	8	1	0	9
	54	8	0	1	9
	55	4	3	2	9
	56	6	3	0	9
	57	4	4	1	9
	58	5	2	2	9
	59	6	3	0	9
	60	6	3	0	9
	Total	316	181	43	540