**Rapport building in child investigative interviews**

**Kimberly Collins**

**Department of Psychology,**

**University of Stirling**

**2012**

**Author’s declaration**

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of my original work that has not been submitted for any other degree or award. All additional sources of contribution have been acknowledged accordingly. The work was completed under the supervision of Dr Martin Doherty and Professor Gwyneth Doherty-Sneddon and conducted at the University of Stirling, United Kingdom.

Kimberly Collins

**Abstract**

The rapport building phase of child investigative interviewing is referred to in practice guidelines as an essential. Nevertheless, in contrast with other aspects of the interview it has been subject to little empirical examination. There is a lack of information on the rapport phase’s impact on children’s communication and whether this changes across a variety of different circumstances. Finally, few researchers have empirically assessed different styles of rapport building. This thesis investigates the communicative influence of the rapport building phase in child investigative interviews. It also examines the effectiveness of a new collaborative play approach to rapport building with respect to its influence on children’s communication and the rapport levels between the interviewer and child.

The investigation began by interviewing practitioners about their perceptions and experiences of rapport building practice, and their opinions on the use of play during the rapport phase. A grounded theory approach to analysis found that interviewers perceive the rapport phase as a tool for facilitating communication with children during the investigative interview. This is achieved in three main ways: (1) assessing the child during the rapport phase, (2) adjusting interview approach based on the child’s presentation during the rapport phase, and (3) producing a psychological outcome in the child that then facilitates communication. The resultant theory and the comments made about play rapport were used in subsequent experimental chapters to design and implement play rapport, and to interpret the empirical findings.

The second line of enquiry investigated the communicative impact of a collaborative play approach to rapport building in adult-child interactions. Children across three different age groups (6-7, 8-10 & 12-14 year olds) were more communicative and demonstrated greater rapport with an adult after play rapport than children in a control condition. The findings indicate that a collaborative play format of rapport building is an effective communication facilitator.

The third empirical study tested play rapport’s efficacy in a mock investigative interview situation. It was compared with the current open style of rapport building used by practitioners in the UK, and a control condition that involved no rapport phase. Older children (8-10 year olds) who experienced play rapport demonstrated information benefits in comparison with children in the control condition. No differences were found between the open style and the control, and the open style and play rapport for information detail or accuracy. Children (5-7 and 8-10 year olds) were however, more resistance to interviewer suggestion after engaging in a play rapport phase in comparison with children who experienced the open style of rapport building. These results indicate the potential of play rapport as a communication facilitator for children in investigative interview settings.

The final empirical chapter examined anxiety data taken from the children during the third study. This was to address the hypothesis that improvements in recall as a result of the rapport phase, and in particular play rapport, were due to a reduction in the children’s anxiety levels. The data showed no differences across the rapport protocols in terms of anxiety for any of the measures. The information benefits found could therefore not be explained with respect to a reduction in anxiety. Alternative theories were then proposed, and future research outlined that could further investigate the psychological underpinnings of the communicative effects of the rapport phase, and the collaborative play rapport approach.

**Acknowledgements**

There are a great number of people who have supported me, either personally or professionally, during the course of my PhD. First of all I would like to thank the ESRC for funding my research and therefore providing the financial support without which the current project would not have been possible. Next I would like to thank all of the police officers, social workers, children and schools who took the time to participate in my research. A special thank you goes to my supervisors Dr Martin Doherty and Professor Gwyneth Doherty-Sneddon for their support. Martin took me on as his PhD student during my second year when Gwyneth moved to Northumbria University, and I am extremely appreciative of his thoroughness and attention to detail when evaluating my work. He has also finally taught me the fine art of how to write concisely! Despite her move to another University Gwyneth has remained a constant source of support and her dedication and hard work never fails to amaze me. She has been my inspiration throughout my undergraduate and postgraduate studies and I hope that our collaboration on this project will not be our last. Thank you also to Victoria Plant, Kayleigh Atkinson, Rebecca Duffield and Stacey Mitchell who were my research assistants during data collection for studies three and four. They kindly allowed me to dress them as pirates which created the event for the children to recall.

A special thank you is reserved for William Webster who assisted in collecting data from the students at Teesside University and also carried out some inter rating work for the research presented in this thesis. I have promised I will return the favour when he begins his PhD and will endeavour to help him out in any way I can! I would also like to thank the psychology staff at Teesside University for their support. In particular, Dr Gavin Oxburgh, Hannah Fawcett (soon to be Dr), Dr Cath Kenny and Dr Helen Limbrick who all can appreciate the extremely difficult task of juggling a full time lecturing post with writing a PhD thesis. It has been a massive help to be able to chat with colleagues who have walked a similar path. My final ‘professional’ thank you is for Professor Ray Bull for his comments on draft work of this thesis and for putting up with random phone calls about my PhD. He is also an inspiration to me and I am very glad that through this process we have become firm friends.

My personal thank you is reserved for all of my family and friends who have encouraged me during my PhD, and have been very understanding about my absence over the past few months. I love them all very much and I can’t wait to have lots of time together now that the process of writing is complete. Especially my brothers, sister and nephew who, even in troubling times, have always managed to put a smile on my face! I look forward to a wonderful summer spending time together.

My final thank you goes to the two most important women in my life. The first is my best friend Dr Karri Gillespie-Smith. It amazes me to think that we met all of those years ago in school and have both sought the same career path in psychology. She is one of the most special and kind hearted people I have ever met, and it is hard to imagine how I would have gotten through the past few years without her professional and emotional support. As far as friends go she is second to none. I would also like to acknowledge her husband Andy who has had to relinquish his wife for hours at a time whilst we have tirelessly discussed the ins and outs of PhD research over the phone.

Finally, my last and most heartfelt thank you goes to my mum, Maureen Turner. Nothing I have ever achieved over the past few years would have been possible without her emotional (and financial!) support. Mums are wonderful people, but I have been truly blessed with mine. There aren’t really any words that can fully convey how grateful I am for all of the help and encouragement she gives me. She is my greatest supporter and yet my biggest critic and I very much appreciate both. She works so unbelievably hard for her family and has strived to teach me that anything in life is possible if you work hard enough. Thank you for giving me the courage and confidence to reach for the stars.

**Publications arising from this thesis**

The following is a list of conference presentations and journal publications that have been adapted from empirical work reported in this thesis:

Collins, K., Doherty, M. J., & Doherty-Sneddon, G. (2012). *Influence of the rapport phase on children’s reports: Implications for the forensic interview.* Manuscript submitted for publication.

Collins, K., Doherty-Sneddon, G., & Doherty, M. J. (2012). *Practitioners’ perspectives on rapport building during child investigative interviews.* Manuscript submitted for publication.

Collins, K., Doherty-Sneddon, G., & Doherty, M.J. (2012). *The communicative impact of a play method of rapport building during child interviews.* Manuscript submitted for publication.

Collins, K., Doherty, M.J. & Doherty-Sneddon, G. (2012). The relationship

between the rapport building phase and children’s communication in child forensic interviews. Paper presentation at the 5th Annual Conference of the International Investigative Interviewing Research Group, 24th - 26th May, Toronto, Canada.

Collins, K., Doherty, M.J., & Doherty-Sneddon, G. (2011). The relationship

between rapport building and children’s communication: Qualitative interviews with Scottish practitioners. Paper presentation given at the 4th Annual Conference of the International Investigative Interviewing Research Group, 1st – 3rd June, Abertay University, Dundee, Scotland.

Collins, K., Doherty, M.J., & Doherty-Sneddon, G. (2011). The impact of rapport

practice on child witness recall and anxiety. Paper presentation given at the 4th Annual Conference of the International Investigative Interviewing Research Group, 1st – 3rd June, Abertay University, Dundee, Scotland.

Collins, K., Doherty-Sneddon., G., & Doherty, M. J. (2010). It’s all to play for:

An alternative approach to rapport building during child investigative interviewing. Paper presentation given at the 3rd Annual Conference of the International Investigative Interviewing Research Group, 22nd – 24th June, Stavern, Norway.

Collins, K., Doherty-Sneddon, G., & Doherty, M. J. (2010). It’s all to play for:

An alternative approach to rapport building during child investigative interviewing. Poster presentation given at the 20th Annual Conference of the European Association of Psychology and Law, 15th – 18th June, Gothenburg, Sweden.

Collins, K., Doherty-Sneddon., G., & Doherty, M. J. (2009). Playing with rapport: The communicative impact of building rapport during child investigative interviews. Paper presentation given at the Annual Conference of the BPS Developmental Section, 9th – 11th September, Nottingham, UK.

Collins, K., Doherty-Sneddon, G., & Doherty, M. J. (2009). Playing with rapport: The communicative impact of building rapport during child investigative interviews. Paper presentation given at the 19th Annual Conference of the European Association of Psychology and Law, 2-5th September, Sorrento, Italy.

Collins, K., Milne, R., & Bull, R. (in prep). *What is’ rapport’ in the context of investigative interviewing?*

**Contents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Page |  |
| **Chapter one: Developmental underpinnings of child forensic interviewing** |  |  |
| 1.1 Communicative dynamic of child forensic interviews | 1 |  |
| 1.2 Cognitive factors | 5 |  |
| 1.2.1 Children’s memory | 5 |  |
| 1.2.2 Alternative recall strategies | 13 |  |
| 1.2.3 Meta-linguistic awareness | 18 |  |
| 1.3 Social factors | 21 |  |
| 1.3.1 Power dynamics | 21 |  |
| 1.3.2 Motivation | 23 |  |
| 1.4 Suggestibility | 25 |  |
| 1.4.1 Suggestibility and development | 25 |  |
| 1.4.2 Anxiety and suggestibility | 29 |  |
| 1.5 Social support strategies | 30 |  |
| 1.5.1 Peer support | 31 |  |
| 1.5.2 Interviewer provided support | 33 |  |
| 1.5.3 The psychological mechanisms of social support | 34 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Chapter two: Rapport** |  |  |
| 2.1 Introduction | 39 |  |
| 2.2 Rapport as a psychological construct | 40 |  |
| 2.2.1 Rapport components | 41 |  |
| 2.3 The rapport phase in practice | 47 |  |
| 2.3.1 Rapport building in the child forensic interview | 48 |  |
| 2.4 Alternative rapport building strategies | 56 |  |
| 2.4.1 Play rapport | 58 |  |
| 2.4.2 The theoretical basis for play rapport | 62 |  |
| 2.5 Thesis rationale and general aims | 67 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Chapter three: The relationship between the rapport phase and children’s communication: The perspectives of practitioners** |  |  |
| 3.1 Introduction | 70 |  |
| 3.1.1 History of child interview guidelines in the UK | 70 |  |
| 3.1.2 Interview practice of Scottish practitioners | 73 |  |
| 3.1.3 Qualitative interviews with Scottish practitioners | 76 |  |
| 3.1.4 The purpose of the present study | 80 |  |
| 3.2 Method | 80 |  |
| 3.2.1 Participants | 80 |  |
| 3.2.2 Data collection | 83 |  |
| 3.2.3 Data analysis | 85 |  |
| 3.2.4 Reflexivity | 97 |  |
| 3.2.5 Critical evaluation of qualitative research | 98 |  |
| 3.3 Results | 100 |  |
| 3.3.1 Developmental stage | 101 |  |
| 3.3.2 Willingness to communicate | 104 |  |
| 3.3.3 Child’s background | 108 |  |
| 3.3.4 Rapport phase redundancy | 109 |  |
| 3.3.5 Understanding | 111 |  |
| 3.3.6 Demonstrate interest | 114 |  |
| 3.3.7 Engagement | 115 |  |
| 3.3.8 Natural interaction | 117 |  |
| 3.3.9 Comfortable | 120 |  |
| 3.3.10 Respect | 123 |  |
| 3.3.11 Trust | 128 |  |
| 3.3.12 Play – practitioner comments | 130 |  |
| 3.4 Discussion | 138 |  |
| 3.4.1 Summary | 138 |  |
| 3.4.2 The rapport phase as a communication tool | 138 |  |
| 3.4.3 Assessment in the rapport phase | 140 |  |
| 3.4.4 Adjustment of interview approach in the rapport phase | 144 |  |
| 3.4.5 Psychological outcome in the rapport phase | 147 |  |
| 3.4.6 Play in the rapport phase | 150 |  |
| 3.4.7 Methodological considerations | 152 |  |
| 3.4.8 Conclusions | 153 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Chapter four: A collaborative play approach to rapport building** |  |  |
| 4.1 Introduction | 155 |  |
| 4.1.1 Play and children’s development | 155 |  |
| 4.1.2 Play activity in the current study | 157 |  |
| 4.1.3 Possible psychological benefits | 159 |  |
| 4.1.4 The rapport phase and adolescence | 160 |  |
| 4.1.5 The purpose of the present study and specific predictions | 161 |  |
| 4.2 Method | 164 |  |
| 4.2.1 Participants | 164 |  |
| 4.2.2 Materials | 164 |  |
| 4.2.3 Design and procedure | 165 |  |
| 4.2.4 Inter-rater agreement | 168 |  |
| 4.3 Results | 169 |  |
| 4.3.1 Rapport indicators | 169 |  |
| 4.3.2 Information elicited | 171 |  |
| 4.3.3 Relationship between information elicited and level of expressivity | 173 |  |
| 4.3.4 Level of enjoyment | 175 |  |
| 4.4 Discussion | 175 |  |
| 4.4.1 Summary | 175 |  |
| 4.4.2 Communicative impact | 175 |  |
| 4.4.3 Impact on psychological rapport | 176 |  |
| 4.4.4 Possible psychological underpinnings of play rapport | 177 |  |
| 4.4.5 Synchrony and attention | 180 |  |
| 4.4.6 Individual differences | 181 |  |
| 4.4.7 Methodological considerations | 182 |  |
| 4.4.8 Conclusions | 183 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Chapter five: The communicative impact of rapport building protocol in mock forensic interviews with children** |  |  |
| 5.1 Introduction | 185 |  |
| 5.1.1 Rapport building in forensic interviews with adults | 186 |  |
| 5.1.2 Rapport building in forensic interviews with children | 188 |  |
| 5.1.3 The purpose of the present study and specific predictions | 191 |  |
| 5.2 Method | 194 |  |
| 5.2.1 Participants | 194 |  |
| 5.2.2 Materials | 195 |  |
| 5.2.3 Design and procedure | 197 |  |
| 5.2.4 Coding | 201 |  |
| 5.3 Results | 204 |  |
| 5.3.1 Verbal information | 204 |  |
| 5.3.2 Non-verbal behaviour | 213 |  |
| 5.3.3 Interpersonal rapport | 215 |  |
| 5.4 Discussion | 216 |  |
| 5.4.1 Summary | 216 |  |
| 5.4.2 Communicative impact of the rapport building phase | 217 |  |
| 5.4.3 Differences across rapport protocols | 220 |  |
| 5.4.4 Interpersonal rapport and affiliation cues | 225 |  |
| 5.4.5 Individual differences | 226 |  |
| 5.4.6 Methodological considerations | 227 |  |
| 5.4.7 Conclusions | 228 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Chapter six: Rapport protocol, communication and anxiety in mock forensic interviews with children** |  |  |
| 6.1 Introduction | 230 |  |
| 6.1.1 Social support | 230 |  |
| 6.1.2 The relationship between anxiety and social support | 231 |  |
| 6.1.3 The purpose of the present study and specific predictions | 234 |  |
| 6.2 Method | 236 |  |
| 6.2.1 Participants | 236 |  |
| 6.2.2 Measures | 237 |  |
| 6.3 Results | 239 |  |
| 6.3.1 Difference between baseline and interview anxiety scores | 239 |  |
| 6.3.2 Effects of rapport protocol, age and gender on changes in anxiety | 240 |  |
| 6.3.3 Relationship between changes in anxiety, recall and suggestibility | 242 |  |
| 6.3.4 Relationship between changes in anxiety and rapport levels | 242 |  |
| 6.4 Discussion | 242 |  |
| 6.4.1 Summary | 242 |  |
| 6.4.2 Rapport protocol and anxiety | 243 |  |
| 6.4.3 Alternative interpretations | 245 |  |
| 6.4.4 Other effects | 246 |  |
| 6.4.5 Methodological considerations | 247 |  |
| 6.4.6 Conclusions | 247 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Chapter seven: Summary, implications and future research** |  |  |
| 7.1 The communicative impact of the rapport building phase | 249 |  |
| 7.2 Summarising the prominent findings | 250 |  |
| 7.3 Theoretical and practical implications | 265 |  |
| 7.4 Future research | 273 |  |
| 7.5 Conclusions | 275 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **References** | 277 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Appendix A** |  |  |
| Typical interview structure | 297 |  |
| **Appendix B** |  |  |
| Rapport guidance for Scottish practitioners | 300 |  |
| **Appendix C** |  |  |
| Research training in qualitative methodology | 302 |  |
| **Appendix D** |  |  |
| Interview schedule for qualitative interviews with Scottish practitioners | 303 |  |
| **Appendix E** |  |  |
| Sample of an interview transcript from an interview with a Scottish practitioner | 309 |  |
| **Appendix F** |  |  |
| List of original categories from open coding | 316 |  |
| **Appendix G** |  |  |
| List of categories that were merged | 318 |  |
| **Appendix H** |  |  |
| List of deleted categories | 320 |  |
| **Appendix I** |  |  |
| Independent researcher analysis of interview transcripts | 321 |  |
| **Appendix J** |  |  |
| Enjoyment questionnaire | 323 |  |

**List of tables**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Page |
| **Table 3.1** |  |
| Participant characteristics | 82 |
| **Table 3.2** |  |
| Sample of categories and their definitions from the constant comparison stage of analysis | 90 |
| **Table 4.1** |  |
| Mean expressivity rating across rapport type, age and gender | 170 |
| **Table 4.2** |  |
| Mean total units of information elicited across rapport type, age and gender | 172 |
| **Table 4.3** |  |
| Mean spontaneous information elicited across rapport type, age and gender | 173 |
| **Table 5.1** |  |
| Total amount of information and information given in the free narrative phase following the different rapport protocols and across age groups | 205 |
| **Table 5.2** |  |
| Accurate units of information given in the free narrative phase following the different rapport protocols and across age groups | 208 |
| **Table 5.3** |  |
| Total inaccurate units of information and inaccurate information given in the free narrative phase following the different rapport protocols and across age groups | 210 |
| **Table 5.4** |  |
| Total intrusions and intrusions given in the free narrative phase following the different rapport protocols and across age groups | 211 |
| **Table 5.5** |  |
| Time spent in mutual eye gaze (ms) following the different rapport protocols and across age groups | 214 |
| **Table 5.6** |  |
| Time spent smiling (ms) following the different rapport protocols and across age groups | 215 |
| **Table 5.7** |  |
| Number of adaptors following the different rapport protocols and across age groups | 215 |
| **Table 5.8** |  |
| Expressivity rating following the different rapport protocols and across age groups | 216 |
| **Table 6.1** |  |
| Changes in heart rate variability (bpm) and state anxiety across age group and rapport protocols | 241 |

**List of Figures**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Page |
| **Figure 2.1** |  |
| Relative importance of the three components of rapport from early to late interactions | 43 |
| **Figure 3.1a** |  |
| Screen print of the initial open codes (*n* = 71) | 87 |
| **Figure 3.1b** |  |
| Screen print of the initial open codes (*n* = 71) | 88 |
| **Figure 3.2** |  |
| Screen print of categories after reduction in the constant comparison stage of analysis | 89 |
| **Figure 3.3** |  |
| Screen print of a sample of the relationships created in NVIVO during the axial coding stage of analysis | 92 |
| **Figure 3.4** |  |
| Screen print of a memo from the constant comparison stage of analysis | 93 |
| **Figure 3.5** |  |
| A screen print of an early model generated in the final stage of analysis | 95 |
| **Figure 3.6** |  |
| Final model of ‘the relationship between the rapport phase and children’s communication in investigative interviews’ | 96 |
| **Figure 4.1** |  |
| Relationship between total information and expressivity rating | 174 |
| **Figure 4.2** |  |
| Relationship between spontaneous information and expressivity rating | 174 |
| **Figure 5.1** |  |
| Differences across rapport protocol for accurate responses to misleading questions | 213 |

**Chapter One**

**Developmental Underpinnings of Child Forensic Interviewing**

##### **1.1 Communicative dynamic of child forensic interviews**

Communication between adults and children typically involve the adult as the main information provider (Lamb & Brown, 2006). Even in conversations in which the child is the source of information, e.g. a mother asking her child what they did in school that day, the adult is still expected to help structure the interaction and fill in any gaps in knowledge that the child may have omitted. This asymmetry in information exchange is a regular and everyday occurrence for children in adult – child conversation (Lamb & Brown, 2006). However, this communicative format is different in child investigative interviews[[1]](#footnote-1) where children are witnesses, victims or perpetrators of **crime**, and the purpose of the interview is to “elicit the child’s account of the events which may require further investigation” (Scottish Executive, 2011, p. 9). According to recent statistics reported by the NSPCC approximately 50,552 children are the subject of crime investigation plans or are on child protection registers in the UK as of 31st March 2011 (<http://www.nspcc.org.uk>). These children come into contact with the criminal justice system for a variety of different reasons and report having experienced a number of different crimes. National statistics indicate 1 in 8 children have experienced severe maltreatment, nearly a quarter of young adults have experienced sexual abuse as a child, 1 in 9 young adults have been exposed to severe physical violence, and 1 in 6 have suffered neglect in childhood (<http://www.nspcc.org.uk>). Evidence from these children is elicited during a forensic interview, and in this particular context the focus of information provision lies predominantly with the child, and *not* the adult. Both the adult and child must adapt their typical communication style, in order that the aims of the forensic interview are met (Lamb & Brown, 2006).

For many children, especially those younger, this communicative requirement is problematic as they are unaware of the purpose and importance of the forensic interview and this can impact upon the information they give (Brown & Pipe, 2003a). The task of facilitating this communicative adaptation therefore lies with the adult interviewer. They must recognise each child’s level of cognitive and social functioning, and tailor their interview approach in order to meet the child’s needs (Home Office, 2011). Once this has been achieved this often enables the child to provide a detailed account of the event(s) they have experienced. It is important to note however, that some communication problems are related to children’s development, and may only improve through time (Piaget, 1962). Nevertheless, the majority of research carried out in the field of child forensic interviewing takes more of a Vygotskian approach. Vygotsky proposed that children’s potential as effective communicators is determined to a certain extent by their environment (Vygotsky, 1962). Their abilities lie within what is called ‘the zone of proximal development’ which can be enhanced by a supportive peer. In this particular context the enhancer is the adult interviewer, who through their own behaviour can provide scaffolding for the child’s communication in the form of appropriate questioning or social support to name but a few (Davis & Bottoms, 2002a, b).

The interview itself has been designed to enhance and accommodate children’s different communication abilities (this is explained in further detail in section 2.2.1). The interview structure is phased and involves four main components (rapport building, free narrative recall, questioning and closure; for further detailed information about these please refer to Appendix A). These phases are in line with the PEACE interview framework supported by the Association of Chief Police Officers (Planning & Preparation; Engage & Explain; Account, Clarification & Challenge; Closure; and Evaluation, Home Office, 2011). In child interview guidelines the **rapport building phase** is often cited as the interviewer’s first opportunity to get to grips with the child’s cognitive development and communication style (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). A second purpose is to make the child feel comfortable enough to communicate their experiences (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). Government guidelines state it is an essential component of the interview and should not be omitted (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2003). Research on this critical component of child forensic interviewing however, is limited in comparison with other aspects of the interview (Hershkowitz, 2009). There is little evidence based information on why it is considered important, how it affects communication, and the ways in which it can be operationalized to maximise children’s communication. Consequently, this thesis explores the communicative impact of the rapport building phase. It assumes a Vygotskian approach, and evaluates various rapport protocols in relation to their efficacy in establishing rapport, and improving communication between interviewers and children. In addition, it aims to design and assess a collaborative play approach to rapport building, and compare its effectiveness with the current rapport protocol used in the UK.

***Introduction outline***

The thesis begins with two introductory chapters that review the literature most relevant to the current research. The present chapter examines previous research investigating how a child’s cognitive and social development, and the social characteristics of the interview, impact upon children’s communication during forensic interviews. This will give the reader an understanding of the current child interview protocol, including the rapport phase, and how in recent decades this has been designed to overcome many of these issues. The chapter will then explain how cognitive and social factors *together* can influence the suggestibility of children, and ultimately lead to a reduction in the credibility of children’s accounts. Finally, it will explain social support mechanisms present during the interview and how these ameliorate the effects of these factors.

In this thesis interview format is discussed with specific reference to the practice used by interviewers in Scotland, England and Wales (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). Interview guidance given in Scotland is much the same as in England and Wales, except the recent revised Scottish guidelines place more of an emphasis on a practise interview between the rapport and free narrative phases of the interview (Scottish Executive, 2003, 2011). Other interview protocols are available elsewhere, but are not widely implemented with child witnesses in the UK (e.g. National Institute of Child and Human Development protocol devised by Orbach, Hershkowitz, Lamb, Sternberg, Esplin, & Horowitz, 2000).

The second chapter focuses on the rapport building phase as a specific approach to social support in the forensic interview. It begins by defining rapport as a psychological construct. While lay accounts of rapport refer to it as a positive interaction, the underlying psychological mechanisms however, are less understood (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). That chapter will explain the components of rapport and how it can be identified. The rapport phase in practice is then described with a detailed discussion about the current rapport protocol used in child forensic interviews. The benefits of this method are considered and areas for improvement are outlined. A new play-based approach to rapport building is then introduced, with an explanation of the theoretical reasons why it may be an effective communication facilitator during child forensic interviews. Finally, the research rationale and aims are described, and the thesis structure is outlined.

**1.2 Cognitive factors**

Children are different from adults in the way they perceive, think about, and understand the world around them (Saywitz, 2002). Their stage of cognitive development determines their capabilities and limitations for communicating information. When seeking information from children, it is essential that the interviewer consider the child’s cognitive development and utilise their existing ability, whilst providing scaffolding for the skills that are still developing. There are many cognitive skills required for successful communication; however within the context of forensic interviewing one of the most important is memory (Ornstein, 1995).

**1.2.1 Children’s memory**

During the forensic interview children are asked to provide an account of their experiences and this requires long term retention and recall of events (Ornstein & Haden, 2002). Previously it was thought that young children would not be capable of providing detailed or accurate reports (for a review see Ornstein & Haden, 2002). Research has now demonstrated that pre-schoolers (e.g. Baker-Ward, Gordon, Ornstein, Larus, & Clubb, 1993) and even infants (Meltzoff, 1988) have memory capabilities to some extent. However, studies do indicate large age differences in children’s memory ability. Memory performance with regards to its organisation, the use of retrieval strategies, and the detail and accuracy of information recalled, seem to improve with development (Bruck & Ceci, 1999; Goodman & Reed, 1986).

An information processing framework is typically used to understand memories for experienced events (Roediger & Gallo, 2002). When exploring how an event is remembered one must consider the three stages of encoding, storage and retrieval. However, the route to remembering is not static and there are a number of factors that affect the progression of information within the child’s developing memory system (Loftus & Davies, 1984). To demonstrate this part of the thesis will focus on Ornstein and Haden’s framework for children’s memories of personally experienced, salient events (Ornstein & Haden, 2002). This has four main principles based around encoding, storage and retrieval: (1) not everything gets into memory; (2) what gets into memory may vary in strength; (3) the status of information in memory changes over time; and (4) retrieval is not perfect. They contend that these four aspects must be considered when planning, conducting and assessing forensic interviews with children, as they all impinge upon the quality of the evidence given.

***Not everything gets into memory***

When interviewing children it is important that interviewers keep in mind that when witnessing an event not every piece of information is encoded. Human perception is limited and we are only capable of attending to and processing a certain amount of information (Ornstein & Haden, 2002). Consequently, aspects of the event are excluded during recall because they have not been represented in memory in the first place. There are a number of different factors that can further exacerbate this effect. For example stress experienced during an event can interfere with encoding. In a study conducted by Merritt, Ornstein, and Specker (1994) children who were undergoing a voiding cystourethrogram, an invasive procedure involving a urinary bladder catheterization, were interviewed about this event. The amount of information recalled was negatively correlated with the level of stress experienced throughout the procedure. The authors state that the stress affected the children’s attention during the event which may have led to reduced encoding of the information. This is especially relevant when interviewing child witnesses of crime as often the experiences that they are reporting are stressful in nature.

Additionally, during the investigation interviewers may have uncovered other relevant information about the crime and the information provided by the child during the interview may serve to corroborate or negate this evidence. Interviewers must be careful that they do not allow this prior information to influence their questioning. Young children in particular are prone to encoding errors and may produce inaccurate information in response to the questioning because they cannot remember correctly or trust that the adult authority figure is correct (Bruck & Ceci, 1999; suggestibility effects are discussed in greater detail below). Consequently, interviewers must take into consideration the fact that the information may not have been initially encoded by the child and should therefore ensure that questioning remains as neutral as possible.

***What gets into memory may vary in strength***

Once information has been encoded the strength of the representation in memory can differ widely (Ornstein & Haden, 2002). This can affect the types of questions required during the interview to elicit the information. Those that have fairly strong memory traces can be easily retrieved with open-ended questions, e.g. “tell me about what happened last night?” Field and laboratory research has consistently shown that these questions are preferable because they utilize recall memory strategies which contain memory traces that are more readily accessible, and can therefore be obtained with minimal prompting (e.g. Dent & Stephenson, 1979). Representations with weak traces are more difficult to recover, and so require more direct questions to guide the focus of the desired information, e.g. “what colour of hair did he have?” However, these engage recognition memory processes that are prone to error and are more likely to narrow the retrieval of information.

In interviews with children, clear developmental differences exist with respect to their responsiveness to these different types of questions (definitions and examples of the full range of questions are given in Appendix A). Baker-Ward et al. (1993) tested the effects of age (3, 5 and 7) on information elicited about a physical examination. Overall, they found that with increasing age, children recalled more correct information and were more resistant to misleading questions. The 7 year olds were better able to provide information in response to open questions than were the younger children. The 3 and 5 year olds tended to answer in greater detail to specific-closed questions. These age effects are thought to be due to developmental changes in a variety of mnemonic skills (Baker-Ward et al., 1993). Older children are quicker at encoding information and have access to a range of retrieval strategies, therefore enabling them to source more detailed and accurate information in total and in response to open questions (Ornstein et al., 1998). In contrast, younger children are less effective at information processing, and require more verbal scaffolding from the interviewer to facilitate their recall.

Thus, interviewers need to be aware of developmental differences in children’s responsiveness to questions, and use this information suitably to tailor their questioning to the cognitive capabilities of the child. Often the rapport building phase provides ample opportunity for the interviewer to gauge this. Interviewers to some extent may be aware of the child’s cognitive functioning prior to meeting the child, by consulting with teachers etc. during planning, but only when communicating with the child directly will the interviewer fully appreciate the child’s responsiveness to different question types (the rapport building phase as a practise for children’s responsiveness to different question types is discussed in greater detail in section 2.3.1).

***The status of information in memory changes over time***

Interviewers also need to be alert to the fact that children’s initial representations may have been subject to change by both internal and external influences (Ornstein & Haden, 2002). For example, post event communication can have a positive impact on children’s accounts (Poole & White, 1993). Appropriate conversations with caregivers can benefit representations by organizing memory detail through rehearsal, therefore strengthening the memory trace (Poole & White, 1993). However, it is the risk of prior memory distortion that is the greatest concern for forensic interviewers. The most obvious consideration is the impact of delay between encoding and retrieval. For example, Flin, Boon, Knox and Bull (1992) found that although both adults’ and children’s memory detail declines over time; this is especially pronounced in younger children. They found children aged 6 recalled significantly less information, after a period of 6 months, than older children (9 years) and adults. Furthermore, pre-school aged children show a significant reduction in amount of information recalled after a shorter time delay of 3 weeks (Ornstein, Gordon & Larus, 1992).

In particular, it is weak representations that are especially susceptible to change at post event. These memories can be reinterpreted based on the child’s current knowledge (e.g. Greenhoot, 2000). A study by Ornstein and colleagues (1998) found that as specific details about a medical examination diminished, children began to fill in the gaps using their general knowledge about visits to the doctor. This is obviously dangerous for the accuracy of the child’s account as this information may be incorrect. Furthermore, fragile memories can also be affected by post event misinformation. If children are exposed to incorrect information during the delay between encoding and retrieval, then they may incorporate this information into their subsequent recall (Hunt & Borgida, 2001). If the interviewer accidently includes incorrect information during their questioning, e.g. in a misleading question, then the child may not only fail to correct the interviewer but may also include this misinformation during later recall opportunities. These suggestibility effects occur because of a variety of cognitive and social factors, and suggestibility will be covered in greater detail in section 1.4

***Retrieval is not perfect***

The final stage of the remembering process is retrieval. This is the central focus of the forensic interview as this is when the witness tries to recall and communicate the event to the interviewer. Even for adult witnesses, not everything in memory can be easily retrieved at all times (Ornstein & Haden, 2002). This is once again particularly pronounced with children as they are still developing many of the information processing skills necessary to achieve this with success. As mentioned above, this accounts largely for the age differences found in responsiveness to open questions, where younger children (6 and under) give less information and may require more direct questions (specific-closed and forced choice) to help locate the necessary details (e.g. Dent & Stephenson, 1979). Information elicited in response to open questions is also more likely to be accurate. These questions draw on the representations that are the easiest for the child to retrieve, i.e. those that they remember best (e.g. Goodman & Reed, 1986). On the other hand direct questioning can provide structure, but is based on recognition memory. Here the interviewer runs the risk that the child may merely guess, or produce information that they do not remember accurately (e.g. Dent & Stephenson, 1979). It is important to bear in mind however, that although younger children give briefer accounts than older children in response to open questions, the information given does not necessarily differ with respect to accuracy (e.g. Lamb, Sternberg & Esplin, 2000). Problems in eliciting information detail from younger children can be improved if the interviewer uses the information given spontaneously by the child, during open questioning as cues for further information, e.g. “you said earlier that he touched you, tell me more about that”. Although this takes more time with younger children, it allows the interviewer to build a more detailed *and* accurate account based on the child’s own words (Goodman & Reed, 1986).

Despite having received training on the relationship between question type and children’s developing memory, interviewers still frequently use direct forms of questioning (Orbach & Lamb, 2001). This is problematic as the information produced from using recognition based memory not only leads to less accurate information, but can also generate erroneous information (Hunt & Borgida, 2001). As mentioned above, if interviewers misinterpret what a child has said, and include this misinterpretation during questioning, then young children may include the incorrect information in subsequent recall. Hunt and Borgida (2001) investigated the effects of misinformation given during direct questioning on children’s communication. Participants were separated into three age groups (3 to 5 and 9 to 11 year old children, and adults). They watched a video presentation and were asked afterwards to recall as much information as they could remember about it. The interviewers’ purposefully added misinformation into the interview, through direct questioning, to test its effects on information given during an immediate interview and an interview 6 to 8 days later. The misinformation had no effect on communication for any of the age groups during immediate recall. However, after the delay the misinformation was incorporated into the younger children’s recall. This may have occurred because the traces were weaker and so children could not assess the information accuracy, and subsequently included it during recall. Research thus shows that younger children may be more informative in response to direct than open questions, but the evidence produced can be of a lesser quality.

The issue is further complicated however, by the fact that young children do not always employ a range of retrieval strategies that would enable them to exhaust their recall (Lamb & Brown, 2006). They have had little practise in organizing their thoughts and memories, and their ability to actively search their memories effectively is underdeveloped (Lamb & Brown, 2006). In some instances young children require communicative scaffolding from interviewers in the form of direct questioning that will provide cues to enable them to produce specific aspects of information.

Based on the complexity and vulnerability of the developing memory system, and its negative implications for evidence quality, best practice guidelines for forensic interviewing of children adopt what is called the ‘funnel’ approach to questioning (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2003, 2011; refer to Appendix A). Once the rapport phase is finished, all children regardless of age, are given a free narrative prompt, e.g. “I understand that something may have happened to you. Please tell me as much as you can remember about this from the very beginning to the very end.” Following this the interviewer then asks open questions that pick up on what the child has said during the free narrative phase, and this allows the child to elaborate on this information, e.g. “you said earlier that he touched you, please tell me more about that”. Both the free narrative phase and the use of open questions gives the child the opportunity to produce as much spontaneous, and more likely accurate, information as possible (e.g. Orbach et al., 2000). Interviewers should then use this information as the basis for prompts for more detailed elaboration. Only once the child’s recall in response to open questions has been exhausted, should specific-closed questions be used to enquire about a particular detail or for clarification on a previous point. They can also be used to elicit further detail from younger children who have given a skeletal account but, due to the risk of reduced accuracy, interviewers are advised to use them sparingly (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2003, 2011). By structuring the interview protocol this way the interviewer is allowing the child to provide as much detail as possible in their own words, whilst increasing the chance that the evidence given will be accurate.

Prior to free recall and questioning, the rapport building phase can be used to provide the opportunity for the child to become familiar with the funnel approach to interviewing. Through asking the child about a neutral event, the interviewer can test their responsiveness to the different question types (Sternberg et al., 1997). This is very useful as it gives the interviewer a feel for the child’s communicative ability. Ideally, the interviewer should adapt their style of questioning in response to this, and continue along this vein during the main phase of the interview (Home Office, 2011). Consequently, it gives both the interviewer *and* the child a chance to assess each other’s needs with regards to communication throughout the interview (Home Office, 2011). Research investigating the benefits of a practise interview during rapport building will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 2.

**1.2.2 Alternative recall strategies**

As well as question type, other approaches for facilitating children’s recall have been investigated. Some have focused on prompting children’s memories through internal cognitive mechanisms whereas others, e.g. anatomical dolls, prompt recall via external cues. These are of relevance to the current thesis as they demonstrate some of the techniques that have been studied for the purpose of improving children’s memory performance during the main substantive phase of the interview.

***Mental Context reinstatement***

Mental context reinstatement is a cognitive technique that has demonstrated potential in helping children remember information (McCauley & Fisher, 1995). During this procedure children are instructed to mentally reconstruct the situation and surroundings in which the event occurred. They are asked to concentrate on the sensory features of the event (e.g. what they saw, smelt, heard and felt) and focus on each aspect of the event in turn. The underlying idea is that the children ‘visualise’ the previous event in more detail as opposed to just trying to remember it. It is based on the encoding specificity principle which states that increasing the similarity between the experienced event, and the retrieval conditions, can better access the original memory trace and therefore increase recall (Tulving & Thomson, 1973).

Mental context reinstatement is a central element of the cognitive interview that is often used during forensic interviews with adult eyewitnesses (McCauley & Fisher, 1995). Findings for the effectiveness of some aspects of the cognitive interview with children, such as recalling events in reverse order and from other perspectives, have produced mixed results. Geiselman and Padilla (1988) found these to be out with the cognitive capabilities of young children whereas more recent work by Milne and Bull (2006) found these techniques to be useful for eliciting information. Further research is required to more fully understand the impact of these procedures on the recall of child witnesses. However, there is ample evidence that mental context reinstatement when used alone can help children’s recall. Children as young as 6 years of age have shown improvements in memory performance when using this approach (e.g. Saywitz & Geiselman, 1998; Saywitz, Geiselman, & Bornstein, 1992). Dietze and Thompson (1993), for example, found 6 to 11 year old children’s information was more accurate when using context reinstatement than when responding to specific questions. Recent research however, has shown that these benefits are limited to information given in response to specific-closed questions and are not found in the free recall phase (Dietze, Powell, & Thomson, 2010). Ideally techniques used to enhance children’s recall, would be of greater benefit if information is facilitated in free recall or in response to open questions as information given in response to these tends to be more accurate (e.g. Dent & Stephenson, 1979).

Recall strategies discussed so far have focused on verbal prompting and its interaction with the development of children’s memory. In addition to these, several nonverbal techniques have been investigated with a view to facilitating more complete recall from younger children (Lamb & Brown, 2006). These are of particular relevance to the current research topic, as the mention of play to practitioners often prompts reference to nonverbal techniques involving props, e.g. anatomical dolls. Prop items are thought to enhance recall for two reasons: (1) increasing the similarity between the interview and the event (encoding specificity principle as mentioned above) and (2) providing points of reference for children with linguistic limitations.

***Anatomical dolls***

The use of dolls in forensic interviewing with children stemmed from their application in clinical settings, as tools to facilitate children’s feelings about their experiences (Poole, Bruck & Pipe, 2011). The idea that children would be able to use these to assist communication is based on the assumption that children are capable of dual representations (Poole et al., 2011). In other words, to use these effectively children have to understand that the doll is an object, and at the same time, is an object representing their body. However, children at 3 years old only perform accurately on dual-representation tasks, involving three-dimensional objects, 75-90% of the time (DeLoache, 2000). Such accuracy levels are too low for anatomical dolls to be considered a reliable communication tool for facilitating evidence. Furthermore, some 4 year olds have difficulty with dual representation. In a study by DeLoache and Marzolf (1995), 12% of their sample of 4 year olds failed to accurately place 3 out of 4 stickers on a doll that corresponded to stickers that were on the children’s bodies. It seems therefore, that younger children may lack the necessary cognitive skills to use this communication aid effectively.

The impact of the dolls on children’s communication also lacks empirical support. In field studies with children alleging abuse, they have been found to be distracted by the dolls and give more ‘fantastic details’ than children who disclose without using the dolls (Thierry, Lamb, Orbach & Pipe, 2005). Laboratory studies have also consistently shown young children (3 to 6 year olds) can give false reports of genital touching using the dolls, without any increase in the reporting of accurate information (Malloy, McKay, Salmon, & Pipe, 2010). Overall, it would seem that the practice of using anatomical dolls to facilitate recall with young children has little theoretical and empirical support. The dolls may even have harmful effects on the accuracy of information given, which can be detrimental to the credibility of children’s evidence.

***Drawings and diagrams***

Another prop that been explored as a potential recall facilitator is the use of drawings, and these have been shown to increase detail in a number of ways. Butler, Gross and Hayne (1995) found that 5-6 year old children who drew an event gave more information than children who used verbal recall only. This benefit persisted at a one month delay between the event and retrieval. In addition, drawings can be used to clarify children’s own names for various body parts. However, care must be taken that these are used at the end of interviews, once verbal retrieval has been exhausted, to prevent unintentionally suggesting sexual content to the child (Lamb & Brown, 2006).

A clear practical problem however, is the reliance on children’s drawings skills. Drawings and self-portraits from younger children, and pre-schoolers in particular, often lack detail and similarity to the item being drawn (Davis, 1983). Young children display a bias towards conveying the identity of the object as opposed to an accurate depiction (Davis, 1983). For example, when asked to draw a cup placed in front of them without a handle, they will draw a cup with a handle (Davis, 1983). Thus, they seem less concerned with providing an accurate illustration of the object they have been asked to draw. This therefore would be problematic when relying on young children’s drawings as accurate representations of their previous experiences, especially with regards to specific details. Not until 9 years of age are children fully capable of providing more realistic representations (Cox, 1992).

A way to overcome this issue is to use body diagrams instead. Body diagrams are realistic drawings of adults and children which are used in much the same way as anatomical dolls. Once again a concern in employing these with children aged 4 and under is that they may not have developed the cognitive skills required for dual representation (DeLoache, 2000; DeLoache & Marlzoff, 1995). Nevertheless, these representations are reliant upon 2D models, as opposed to the 3D models required with anatomical dolls. This could perhaps facilitate the skill of dual representation as the cognitive processing involved when understanding 2D models is less sophisticated than the cognitive skills required for 3D. Indeed, field studies have shown that using direct questions with diagrams, after extensive use of open questions, can improve the completeness of recall (Teoh, Yang, Lamb & Larsson, 2010). However, because these are real life cases with alleged victims of abuse, the accuracy of this additional information is not clear. The interviewers did not have access to the alleged events and therefore cannot assess the accuracy of the children’s reports. Laboratory based studies can better investigate the veracity of these accounts, and unfortunately research has shown that like anatomical dolls, the body diagrams can in fact increase false reporting (Poole et al., 2011).

***Summary***

Children’s memory development greatly influences their ability to recall information, and should impact upon the interviewer’s decision making with regards to questioning technique. The retrieval of information may be assisted by nonverbal props and opportunities to reinstate the context, and these work by providing support for gaps in children’s mnemonic capabilities. Nonetheless, they should be used cautiously with younger children and only once open ended verbal prompting has been exhausted. Other techniques need to be investigated that will support young children’s mnemonic limitations without a cost for accuracy.

**1.2.3 Meta-linguistic awareness**

A further aspect of children’s cognition that can greatly impact upon their communication during forensic interviews is their meta-linguistic awareness (Lamb & Brown, 2006). As mentioned above, typical adult-child interactions involve adults as the main information providers, who often communicate with children about information that they (the adults) are already aware of (Lamb & Brown, 2006). In forensic interviews with children the roles are reversed, and it is the child that possesses the necessary information that the adult interviewer usually knows little about. Nevertheless, children’s lack of experience with, and knowledge about, these interviews can interfere with their ability to be capable informants. Their cognitive immaturity means they lack understanding of the abstract principles of law and welfare (Saywitz, 1989). Consequently, the interviewer must provide preparation and instruction about the expectations of the interview, in order that the child functions optimally within this setting.

The key issue with this meta-linguistic deficit is that children are unaware of the necessity for elaborate information. Typical communication with adults requires only a brief summary of the essential information, e.g. what children did in school that day (Sternberg, Lamb, Esplin, Orbach, & Hershkowitz, 2002). As a result children tend to communicate this way regardless of context, and this is evident to a greater extent in responses from younger children (Sternberg et al., 2002). Those aged 6 and under will give briefer information than older children and adults. There is also a significant difference in the amount of recall elicited between *pre-schoolers* and 6 year old children (e.g. Goodman & Reed, 1986; Oates & Shrimpton, 1991). These differences may be explained in part by social communication theory. According to Grice (1975 as cited in Howie, Kurukulasuriya, Nash, & Marsh, 2009) communication is founded on the principle of co-operation where each participant’s contribution is based on a shared understanding of what is necessary. Grice’s claims were explained in a series of maxims. The maxim of quantity is often used by forensic linguists to explain why children do not respond elaborately to open prompts (Howie et al, 2009). According to this maxim during typical conversation we try to make our communicative contribution no more and no less than what is needed. In contrast information required during forensic interviews should be as detailed as possible (Home Office, 2011). Investigative interviewers must therefore encourage younger children to give more elaborate narratives. This is a difficult task as outlining the complex requirements of the forensic system to children would probably foster confusion. Furthermore, explaining how their alleged experiences are not legal, or even moral, could jeopardise the accuracy of the child’s information by reducing the spontaneity of the evidence they choose to provide.

Interviewers are taught instead to focus on increasing children’s awareness of the types of information that are required during the forensic interview. One way in which this is achieved is through the rapport phase. As mentioned previously, when attempting to build rapport with children interviewers are instructed to use an open questioning style, and even a practise interview. Responding to free narrative prompts and open ended questions prior to the main interview gives the child an indication of how the interviewer expects them to respond, and gives them an opportunity to practise answering these types of questions (the benefits of the practise interview will be discussed in greater detail during the second chapter).

The ground rules for the interview are also covered in the rapport phase and are designed to convey to the child the communicative expectations of the interview. Of particular relevance to meta-linguistic awareness, interviewers state to the child that they were not present during the event, and are reliant upon the child’s account to gain an understanding of what has happened (Home Office, 2011). Children are also told that if the interviewer misinterprets something they have mentioned previously then the child should correct them (Home Office, 2011). This component of the interview is therefore essential in managing the child’s expectations and increasing their understanding of the nature of a forensic interview.

A technique that has demonstrated success in addressing children’s meta-linguistic deficits is Narrative Elaboration Training (NET, Saywitz & Snyder, 1996; Brown & Pipe, 2003b). NET functions by teaching children, prior to an interview, a strategy for retrieval by organizing the components of the target event into categories (Lamb & Brown, 2006). Pictorial cue cards are used to help report forensically relevant information by guiding and organizing the child’s retrieval strategies (Saywitz & Snyder, 1996). These are used during training to help the child recall information about a recent neutral event, and then they are used to aid communication about the target event. NET is designed to focus on children’s meta-linguistic limitations which typically hamper their responses to open questions. In the training children are taught about the level of detail expected during retrieval, by increasing their knowledge about the expectations of the listener. Various laboratory studies have shown enhanced recall after NET for 3 to 11 year old children, without a corresponding decrease in the accuracy of information (Saywitz & Snyder, 1996; Dorado & Saywitz, 2001). It has also been shown to have benefits in increasing the narratives of children with learning disabilities (Nathanson, Crank, Saywitz, & Ruegg, 2007). Nevertheless, the efficiency of NET has been criticised as verbal prompting of the required categories (people, setting, actions, conversation, and affect) have been found to be just as effective as NET and is far simpler to implement (Brown & Pipe, 2003a). Further, recall techniques that require training or lengthen the interview are less likely to be adopted by practitioners as they already have great demands on their time and resources (Brown & Pipe, 2003a).

**1.3 Social factors**

In comparison with the influence of children’s cognitive development on communication during forensic interviews, the impact of social factors is less well understood. Research over the past 15 years has touched on some of the socioemotional aspects of the interview that interact with children’s ability to communicate. This section will present findings to date on the role of some of these factors during child forensic interviews, and will outline areas for further consideration.

**1.3.1 Power dynamics**

Children’s informativeness can be impaired by the typical power asymmetry that exists in adult-child interactions (Ceci, Ross, & Toglia, 1987). Children often see adults as figures of authority who provide guidance on how to behave and who administer punishment. This prevailing social dynamic is engendered in many aspects of children’s lives, e.g. in school, with parents etc. which can make it difficult to overcome. The forensic interview setting is no different, and the problems outlined above with regards to meta-linguistic deficits may also be related to power asymmetry. Children assume adults have knowledge that they themselves do not, and that this knowledge is more likely to be accurate than their own (Lamb & Brown, 2006). Consequently, because they attribute superior knowledge to the interviewers, they do not understand the necessity for elaborate accounts and/or they may become more compliant and fail to correct interviewers when they have been inaccurate (Ceci et al., 1987).

Investigative interviewing can be a cognitively demanding task for interviewers too. They have to constantly monitor how they interact with the child socially and linguistically, listen to and remember the child’s responses, use these responses as a basis for further questioning, whilst all the while keeping in mind the child’s stage of development and how this interacts with their interviewing style. Often this can increase their cognitive load and lead to misunderstandings on the part of the interviewer (Ceci et al., 1987). Children may fail to correct the interviewer because they assume the adult has superior knowledge and, as mentioned above, children can carry forward this misinformation in subsequent recall (Ceci et al., 1987). When investigating the psychological mechanisms involved in these effects Ceci et al. (1987) found that young children’s (4-5 years old) resistance to misleading questions was reduced when other children provided the misleading information as opposed to an adult. As such, it could be the perception of the adult as the authority figure that prevents children from correcting the interviewer. Interviewers need to be aware of the dangers of their perceived power and communicate to the child that they have no knowledge of the alleged issues, that the child must try and tell the interviewer as much information as possible, and that it is okay for the them to correct the interviewer if they make a mistake (Sternberg et al., 2002). In general this is the purpose of the ground rules component of the pre-substantive phase. Research on the effectiveness of this however, and its impact on the perceived power imbalance, remains largely unexplored.

An additional factor that further exacerbates the power asymmetry is that many children often feel they have limited control over the interview process. Westcott and Davies (1996) carried out qualitative interviews with children who had previously participated in forensic interviews investigating allegations of sexual abuse. A number of children stated they felt uncomfortable with the interviewer and thought the progression of events was too fast (Westcott & Davies, 1996). Often the experiences being reported by these children have left them feeling powerless and the interview may in some way reinforce these emotions (Wade & Westcott, 1997). The interviewer needs to make some attempt to redress this power imbalance by listening effectively to the child’s needs during the interview, whilst maintaining appropriate investigative interviewing practice.

**1.3.2 Motivation**

Maturation provides many benefits in terms of children’s cognitive abilities; nevertheless it can introduce additional social barriers for interviewers to overcome. Older children usually have a greater understanding of the interview’s purpose and its resulting implications (Pipe, Lamb, Orbach & Cederborg, 2007). As a result this can affect children’s motivation to communicate as they are more sensitive to the sometimes far reaching consequences of a disclosure (Lamb & Brown, 2006). Of particular concern is if the alleged perpetrator has a close relationship with the child. Field studies of investigative interviews have consistently shown that children of all ages are far less likely to disclose if they have a personal relationship with the suspect (e.g. Hershkowitz, Horowitz & Lamb, 2005). Despite their experiences, they still have feelings of loyalty and this can reduce their motivation to disclose (Mian, Wehrspann, Kalijner-Diamond, LeBaron, & Winder, 1986).

Children are also concerned about the impact of their disclosure on other family members. Support from caregivers is associated with increased disclosure rates in suspected abuse victims. Lawson and Chaffin (1992) found that children, whose caregivers accepted the possibility that their child may have been abused, were 3.5 times more likely to report abuse during a forensic interview than were children whose caregivers denied any possibility. A recent study by Malloy, Brubacher and Lamb (2011) investigated children’s expectations about the consequences of a disclosure. They found that if children thought their disclosure would impact negatively upon themselves or their family then this inhibited their communication. Furthermore, children can often feel embarrassed and ashamed, particularly in cases of child sexual abuse, and even sometimes guilty when communicating their experiences during forensic interviews (Goodman-Brown, Edelstein, Goodman, Jones, & Gordon, 2003). Part of the interviewer’s role therefore is to make the child feel as comfortable as possible, and to convey a supportive atmosphere, to better enable them to disclose.

Adolescence in particular may provide problems for motivation where these young people can be more resistant to assistance from the interviewer (Saywitz, 2002). As children get older they become more sensitive to how people will judge them (Meeuse, Van De Schoot, Keijsers, Schwartz, & Branje, 2010). Teenagers are more easily embarrassed and this has been shown to interfere with how forthcoming they are with information they perceive as uncomfortable (e.g. sexual abuse Saywitz, Goodman, Nicholas, & Moan, 1991). In addition, adolescents are at a stage in their social development in which they are establishing their own identity that is distinct from their parents and other authority figures (Klimstra, Hale, Raaijmakers, Branje, & Meeus, 2010). They express a desire to be viewed as autonomous, and consequently can present as oppositional and moody if they are not treated with an appropriate level of maturity (Saywitz, 2002). Therefore whilst adolescents require support, interviewers need to be careful that this is carried out with an ‘appropriate’ level of respect that is commensurate with their stage of social development.

***Summary***

Thus there exists a variety of socioemotional factors that may well impinge upon children’s and young people’s motivations to communicate. Consequently, techniques to scaffold children’s cognitive limitations only help solve one aspect of children’s communication during these interviews. Further procedures need to be investigated that will redress the typical power imbalance present during these adult-child interactions, and encourage children to want to communicate with interviewers despite such socioemotional factors.

**1.4 Suggestibility**

This introductory chapter now moves on to discuss a particular aspect of children’s communication during forensic interviews that is greatly influenced by both cognitive and social factors. A large body of research in this field has looked at the suggestibility of children i.e. the ways in which children’s reports can be affected by information from their adult interviewer (e.g. Bruck & Ceci, 1999; Ceci & Bruck, 1993). Although not purposefully executed by the interviewer, this can occur because of preconceived ideas that alter the content and structure of the questioning (White, Leichtman, & Ceci, 1997). Also, as mentioned above, the cognitive overload experienced during the interview, can confuse the interviewer and lead to a misconstruction of events (Ceci et al., 1987). This misinformation can then be conveyed to the child during the questioning, and because of poor memory ability and the social demand characteristics of the interview, the child may fail to correct the interviewer and can even incorporate the incorrect information during subsequent recall.

**1.4.1 Suggestibility and development**

***Cognitive factors***

Of particular importance is the general finding that there exists a developmental difference in the suggestibility of children, with younger children being especially susceptible. One of the key underlying reasons for this effect is young children’s poorer memory performance. As mentioned previously, they can find the process of retrieval particularly problematic, and demonstrate more success with recognition based memory tasks (specific-closed and forced choice questions) than free recall (free narrative prompts/open questions, Saywitz & Lyon, 2002). Overall, researchers have consistently found that with pre-school aged children interviewers must rely more heavily on direct questioning, because young children usually generate little information in response to open-ended questions (Ornstein et al., 1992; Baker-ward et al., 1993). Their poor memory capabilities therefore make them particularly susceptible to suggestibility effects.

Children’s responsiveness to open questions can also be lacking due to their limited language development. Their ability to produce information is not as successful as their ability to understand information, making them less able to produce long answers in response to open questions, but much better able to answer direct questions about their experiences (Saywitz & Lyon, 2002). A difficulty with recognition based questions is that children frequently respond with a yes or a no. Often if young children are unsure of the answer then they will guess, using one of these two response options, or choose what they believe the appropriate response should be, therefore increasing the chance that the information provided is inaccurate (e.g. Dent & Stephenson, 1979). Direct questions also suggest to the child what the interviewer believes, and as a result tend to guide the child’s answer in a particular direction. If the child cannot remember the answer, but trusts the adult authority figure’s interpretation, then inaccurate information may be incorporated into the child’s account as a result (see section 1.2.1 on the effects of misinformation).

The strength of the original memory trace is another factor that can affect suggestibility. Marche (1999) examined this in 3 to 5 year old children’s memory of a recently experienced event. In general, exposure to misleading information when questioned by the interviewer increased the reporting of this information. In addition, children who saw the event once were more easily misled by the interviewer than children who experienced the event several times. The latter children also had to be repeatedly exposed to misinformation before they would report it. For these young children strength of the memory trace was inversely related to the probability of reporting misinformation. As mentioned above, young children demonstrate decreased performance in encoding information, and due to a lack of understanding about the importance of their experiences, may be less likely to rehearse these events (Poole & White, 1993). Consequently, some of the information they encoded may only have a weak memory trace and be more susceptible to interviewer suggestion.

Interference effects between encoding and retrieval can also affect the suggestibility of children’s accounts. If the child is exposed to inaccurate information during this time period, and the interviewer’s questions also touch on this information, then the suggested information may be incorporated into the child’s account because they fail to distinguish between the memory for the original event and memory for the suggestive questions (Roberts & Blades, 1998). This occurs because young children often have difficulty in monitoring the source of their beliefs (Roberts & Blades, 1998). If the child has been exposed to false information about an experienced event, they can confuse memories of the actual event with memories for the false information. Dramatic developmental differences exist with respect to source monitoring abilities. Research involving simple tasks has shown 5 year olds to be significantly better than 3 year old children (O’Neill & Gopnick, 1991). Furthermore, age related performance is evident in older children also, although this is often a function of the difficulty of the task (Ackil & Zaragoza, 1995). Consequently, difficulty in identifying the source of beliefs is problematic in forensic settings, as children may be more susceptible to false beliefs encouraged by suggestive questioning (Roberts & Blades, 1998).

***Social factors***

The social characteristics of the interview can also increase children’s suggestibility. Central to this is the child’s perception of the adult as the authority figure. Young children in particular acquiesce to adult’s misinformation about the event because they perceive the adult as having control over the interaction (Bruck & Ceci, 1999). These effects can be exacerbated when the interview is conducted in an intimidating manner (e.g. no smiling, staring etc.), or with social pressure (e.g. Garven, Wood, Malpass, & Shaw, 1998). The impact of the authority is increased, and children can become fearful of the interviewer resulting in increased suggestibility. A further consideration in relation to authority is children’s understanding of the interviewer’s profession. Previous personal or family related encounters with the police or social services may not have been a positive experience for the child. Both of these occupations typically involve an aspect of authority, and the police are often associated with punishment. Fear of getting into trouble and the possible consequences of their disclosure, may reduce the likelihood that children will correct interviewers’ inaccurate information (Lamb & Brown, 2006). Overall, any increase in the interviewer’s perceived power, through intimidation or pressure, can lead to greater suggestibility.

Conversely, other procedures with child witnesses that focus on social factors have been shown to reduce suggestibility. Doherty-Sneddon and McAuley (2000) investigated the effects of the live link on children’s ability to give information about a neutral event. The live link is a form of video-mediated communication that allows children to give evidence from a room outside the main court room. This protective measure shields the child from the accused and the often intimidating atmosphere of the court room. In Doherty-Sneddon and McAuley’s (2000) study the children (6 and 10 year olds) were interviewed about a recently experienced neutral event either face to face or across a live link. More incorrect information was given in the face to face condition in response to specific-closed questions, and the younger children were significantly more resistant to leading questions in the live link condition. The authors attribute the benefits of the live link condition to a decrease in the social distance between the interviewer and child. Reducing the immediacy of the interviewer may have decreased intimidation and subsequently increased the children’s confidence levels, therefore making them more likely to correct the interviewer’s leading suggestions.

**1.4.2 Anxiety and suggestibility**

An additional factor that is of relevance to children’s suggestibility is anxiety. The cognitive and social demands of the interview, the unfamiliar interviewer and interview scenario, and the stressful nature of the required information, often render the forensic interview an unpleasant experience for children (Moston & Engleberg, 1992). This can generate anxiety which may have a negative impact on children’s ability to resist misinformation (Almerigogna, Ost, Bull, & Akehurst, 2007). In research involving cognitive tasks, participants who suffer from anxiety usually demonstrate poorer performance than non-anxious individuals (Eysenck & Calvo, 1992). Eysenck (1992) has stated that during event recall highly anxious individuals are overly concerned with self-presentation and the possibility of failure. A portion of their cognitive resources are thus expended on these concerns that would otherwise have contributed to the memory strategies used for recall, which in turn could have reduced the effects of suggestibility (Almerigogna et al., 2007). The participants may therefore have had reduced resources available to properly search memories when presented with contradictory information.

For state anxiety in particular, where the *situation* affects the person’s anxiety levels, increased anxiety often leads to a misinterpretation of information, or an inability to answer questions correctly (Almerigogna et al., 2007). Therefore it is possible that individuals who are highly anxious about the interview are more suggestible than less anxious individuals. In fact, Gudjonsson (1988) provided support for this prediction with adult participants where he found high levels of state anxiety, as measured by the Spielberger State-Trait Anxiety Inventory, were correlated with scores on his measure of interrogative suggestibility (the Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale: Gudjonsson, 1984). With respect to children, much of the research investigating the effects of interviewer support has found the provision of a supportive atmosphere to reduce suggestibility (e.g. Carter, Bottoms, & Levine, 1996; Goodman, Bottoms, Schwartz-Kenney, & Rudy, 1991). Such authors attribute the beneficial effects of the support to a reduction in anxiety (this is discussed in greater detail in section 1.5.3 below). A recent study investigating the relationship between anxiety, support and suggestibility found that 8 to 11 year old children who scored high on post interview anxiety measures, more often responded incorrectly to misleading questions. In addition, pre to post interview changes in anxiety were positively correlated with more incorrect responses to misleading questions (Almerigogna et al., 2007).

**1.5 Social support strategies**

Some of the research investigating ways to overcome the issues outlined so far has focused on the provision of support during the interview. It is important to keep in mind that some of the deficits, e.g. source monitoring, are related more to the child’s developing cognition. This may not be improved by a social intervention. As we shall see in this section however, the majority of the other factors, e.g. anxiety, power, reduced motivation and suggestibility, can be alleviated through social support and indirectly influence children’s cognitive limitations. The underlying premise is that social support may reduce anxiety, making children more comfortable during the interview and consequently improving recall. This is thought to work on two levels: (1) allowing children to focus on recall and the implementation of recall strategies, and (2) empowering children and therefore increasing their motivation to communicate. In contrast, critics have argued that social support could increase suggestibility, with children wanting to please the interviewer once a relationship has been established (Moston & Engleberg, 1992). In other research not focusing on eyewitness recall, social support has enhanced the wellbeing of adults and adolescents, their ability to remember information accurately and their academic performance (e.g. Cohen & Wills, 1985). It seems logical therefore to expect similar benefits with children.

**1.5.1 Peer support**

Social support can be given in the form of a supportive person present during the interview who is not involved in the criminal investigation. Research in this area has predominantly looked at the influence of a same-aged peer as the support person. Moston and Engleberg (1992) were one of the first researchers to investigate this, and they found children (aged 7 to 10 years) interviewed with a peer present, did not recall more detailed and accurate information than children interviewed alone. Improvements however were found when children discussed the event with the peer *prior* to the interview. Moston and Engleberg accredited these benefits to a reduction in anxiety levels - although this was not tested. Nevertheless, as explained below, it is more likely that cognitive factors, such as rehearsal or memory cueing from the prior discussion with the peer, may have enhanced the child’s recall abilities.

Greenstock and Pipe (1996, 1997) investigated peer support further, this time extending the age range to 5 to 10 year olds, and they also found no benefits in recall with a same-aged peer unless a prior discussion had occurred. Based on Mosten and Engleberg’s (1992) notion that improvements in memory were due to reduced anxiety, Greenstock and Pipe (1996) measured the children’s anxiety levels using the state version of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (Spielberger, Edwards, Lushene, Montuori & Platzek, 1973). No differences were found across conditions for peer support or anxiety levels. In their 1997 study they included a condition in which the peer could not only discuss the event with the child beforehand, but could also make comments during the interview. In addition the peer had either participated during the event or had not. They found no differences in correct information given in response to free-recall, specific-closed or misleading questions. They also examined the amount of correct information discussed by the children in their pre-interview conversations and during free recall alone. Here children in the peer-support condition in which the peer experienced the prior event, gave more correct information than the children in the peer-support without prior experience and the children interviewed alone. Once again no differences were found for anxiety levels. These improvements in memory performance can be accredited to rehearsal of information and memory cueing as a result of the prior discussion with the peer.

In sum, these data suggest that improvements in recall and suggestibility occur only when the peer and child engage in a prior discussion about the event under investigation. Nevertheless, children very rarely participate in forensic interviews with peers present. Therefore these findings are of limited practical benefit, but theoretically they still contribute to our understanding of the relationship between support and anxiety-reduction in children. Based on the current findings, the increased accuracy does not seem to be due to a reduction in anxiety. However, it is important to keep in mind that these were laboratory based studies in which the child participants may not have been particularly anxious in the first place. It is still possible that peer support could be a mediator of anxiety during real life forensic interviews, where the information being reported is of a stressful nature, and the stakes of a full disclosure are much higher. Further detailed investigation, incorporating field research, is required to understand the psychological mechanisms underlying the possible benefits of this form of support.

**1.5.2 Interviewer-provided support**

Interviewer support on the other hand is a feasible and an easily implemented intervention for improving communication during child forensic interviews. It is often conveyed through an interviewer’s verbal and nonverbal behaviour, e.g. supportive comments, verbal facilitators, leaning forward, head nods, smiling etc. Once again non-eyewitness research with adults indicates benefits for task performance, and in particular short term recall, when participants are tested by supportive adults (e.g. Sarason & Sarason, 1986). As such, interviewer-provided support should also improve children’s recall and reduce suggestibility. Without a direct comparison it is difficult to pin point exactly why interviewer support may be better than peer support. One of the reasons could be that the adult authority figure is often the source of apprehension for children (Ceci et al., 1987). If the interviewer’s approach is more supportive, then the negative impact of this is counteracted more directly.

Goodman et al. (1991) were one of the first researchers to test the effects of interviewer-provided support on children’s reports. Child participants from two age groups (3 to 4 and 5 to 7 year olds) who received an inoculation at a medical centre were interviewed by an adult exhibiting supportive behaviours (e.g. smiling, verbal feedback), or an adult without these supportive behaviours. Social support was found to reduce inaccuracies during free recall, and after a 4 week delay the younger children in this condition were more resistant to misleading questions and questions that incorrectly suggested abuse. It appears social support from interviewers reduced the suggestibility of younger children, and improved the accuracy of their information.

Research by Carter et al. (1996) found comparable effects for interviewer support with 5 to 7 year olds. Similar to Goodman et al. (1991) they compared supportive with non-supportive interviewers. This time however the supportive interviewers used behaviours that had been found to be clinical indicators of warmth, e.g. eye contact, rapport building, smiling. Children in the supportive condition were more resistant to misleading questions, but unlike Goodman et al. (1991) no differences were found across groups for information in response to free recall or specific-closed questions. This was perhaps because the nonsupportive interviewer was more intimidating than Goodman et al’s neutral condition, thus strengthening the effects of support. Unlike peer support, the benefits of interviewer support were not attributed to cognitive factors. Once again, similar to Moston and Engleberg’s (1992) hypothesis, the researchers’ in both studies attribute these findings to anxiety reduction. Interviewer-provided support may have reduced the children’s feelings of anxiety about the interview process, decreasing intimidation, which in turn increased their confidence levels. However, no empirical data was collected to support this theory.

**1.5.3 The psychological mechanisms of social support**

So far it seems that social support, provided by either a peer or an interviewer, can affect the accuracy of children’s reports. In particular, increased resistance to suggestibility is a robust finding. However, we have yet to understand the underlying psychological processes that facilitate these effects. The researchers have mentioned a number of possible mediators, namely anxiety reduction and memory rehearsal, but these theories lack any empirical validation (Davis & Bottoms, 2002a, b). The authors of the research mentioned so far suggest that social support works by lowering children’s anxiety levels and feelings of intimidation, subsequently increasing their feelings of empowerment and confidence which in turn make them better able to resist interviewer misinformation. Much of the research has found that accuracy is benefited consistently by correct responses to misleading questions. This indicates that the effects of social support may be specific to suggestibility resistance.

Davis and Bottoms (2002b) have proposed an alternative idea to anxiety reduction, and theorize that these findings point to the social psychological construct of perceived self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is a person’s belief about their own ability to complete a given task (Bandura, 1982). It is based on a number of sources including the behaviours and attitudes of other people, task performance and physiological measures, e.g. heart rate and sweat response (Bandura, 1982). Self-efficacy judgements by children are good predictors of their academic ability, and protocols that target these judgements have been shown to improve children’s task performance (Schunk, 1991). Davis and Bottoms (2002a, b) propose that interviewer support reduces children’s suggestibility because of an increase in their perceived ‘resistance efficacy’. This component of self-efficacy is thought to work by empowering the children through social support. The typical power asymmetry between adults and children is reduced because the children are less likely to be intimidated by the adult authority figure; therefore enabling them to resist interviewer suggestibility. The children perceive themselves as capable of correcting the interviewer and consequently are more likely to achieve this.

Davis and Bottoms (2002b) decided to test their resistance efficacy theory along with the previously hypothesized benefits of anxiety reduction on children’s eyewitness reports (Mosten & Engleberg, 1992; Carter et al., 1996). Six and seven year old children participated in a play session with a female experimenter, and were interviewed immediately afterwards. Once again the children were assigned to a supportive or unsupportive condition. Based on Carter et al’s (1996) study, the supportive interviewer used clinical indicators of warmth when interacting with each child. In contrast, the unsupportive interviewer withdrew these behaviours and purposefully acted in the opposite way to the supportive interviewer. Anxiety was measured using the state component of the State Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (Spielberger et al., 1973). Davis and Bottom’s resistance efficacy theory was tested by administering a Resistance Efficacy Scale to the children. Each item was designed to examine the child’s perceived self-efficacy at resisting the interviewer (e.g. “how easy or hard would it be to tell the interviewer he was wrong about something, if you know he is wrong?”).

In support of Carter et al’s (1996) findings, the children in the supportive condition gave more correct responses to misleading questions, and were therefore less suggestible than children in the unsupportive condition. Further, children in the unsupportive condition reported greater anxiety levels than children in the supportive condition. It was not related however to increased suggestibility, indicating that anxiety did not have a mediating effect. The effects of resistance efficacy were found only with the older children (7 year olds). This was greater when provided with support and these children were in turn more resistant to misleading questions. As such, the findings support Davis and Bottom’s (2002b) theory that resistance efficacy mediates the effects of social support on children’s suggestibility, but for older children only.

In addition, their study was the first to find a link between interviewer support and children’s anxiety levels. This finding was replicated and extended by Almerigogna et al. (2007) in their laboratory study with 8 to 11 year old children. This time however they found that participants, who scored highly on both trait and state anxiety measures, were more likely to respond incorrectly to misleading questions. Furthermore, the changes in anxiety levels from pre to post interview were positively correlated with increased suggestibility. Contrary to the findings of Davis and Bottom’s (2002b) study, anxiety did appear to mediate the effects of interviewer support on children’s accuracy.

Taken together, these findings indicate that interviewer support is beneficial in improving the veracity of children’s accounts, at the very least in laboratory settings. But what would be the effect in real life forensic interviews? It would be difficult to ascertain which underlying psychological mechanisms mediate children’s reports during actual interviews, without subjecting children to measures of anxiety and resistance efficacy. Nevertheless, some of the field research carried out does indicate potential benefits of interviewer support. Hershkowitz and colleagues (Hershkowitz, Orbach, Lamb, Sternberg, & Horowitz, 2006) explored the dynamics of interviews with children who were strongly suspected to have experienced abuse, but who did not disclose during the interview. Interviews with non-disclosers contained fewer supportive comments from interviewers, than did interviews with children who disclosed. In addition, Hershkowitz (2009) examined 71 forensic interviews of alleged child victims of sexual abuse and subjected these to a detailed psycholinguistic analysis. Children tended to give more information when interviewers demonstrated a higher level of verbal support. Interestingly, this was more pronounced with less talkative children. Hershkowitz (2009) hypothesized these children may be in greater need of assistance in order to facilitate communication, and this remains an area for future development with regards to interviewer support.

Overall, support, whether in the form of a same-aged peer or the investigative interviewer, appears to improve the accuracy of children’s information. No evidence was found to indicate that greater support may negatively affect children’s suggestibility (Moston & Engleberg, 1992), and in fact interviewer support in particular consistently generated greater *resistance* to suggestibility. The research discussed here has found support for two underlying psychological mechanisms that produce this effect. Anxiety reduction was shown to have a mediating effect for children’s accuracy in Almerigogna et al’s study (2007). This is in line with Carter et al’s (1996) hypothesis that children should be less anxious when interviewed by a supportive interviewer. The interview situation can be an unpleasant experience for children, and by providing support, the interviewer lessens any negative feelings and socioemotional factors at play. This then reduces suggestibility by making the child feel more comfortable, subsequently allowing them to focus on the cognitively demanding task of resisting misinformation (Eyseneck & Calvo, 1992). The children are possibly better able to search their memories to compare the contradictory information provided by the interviewer, with their memory for what actually occurred. These findings however, are based on a single study and should be replicated with further research.

Support was also found in part for Davis and Bottom’s (2002a, b) resistance efficacy theory. Here the interviewer-provided support was thought to reduce children’s intimidation and subsequently redress the power asymmetry. As such, children have increased feelings of empowerment and feel more confident about correcting any misinformation provided by the interviewer. Davis and Bottom’s (2002a, b) study is the only one to date that has tested this theory, and like anxiety reduction, replication and further detailed research is required. Chapter 2 will now go on to examine a particular approach to social support with children in forensic interviews, namely rapport building. The evidence surrounding rapport building will be considered with respect to the cognitive and social factors discussed so far in this thesis, and the theories of social support.

**Chapter Two**

**Rapport**

**2.1 Introduction**

Rapport building is a specific approach to social support during forensic interviews, and even has a particular segment of the pre-substantive phase designated to it. It is here that the interviewer demonstrates their support, by attempting to build a positive relationship with the child prior to hearing their disclosure about the alleged crime (Home Office, 2011). In addition, it is designed to help overcome some of the social, and even cognitive issues described in chapter 1. Practice guidelines emphasise the importance of this phase by stating, “Rapport is essential…” (Home Office, 2011, p. 70). As mentioned at the beginning of chapter 1, although it is regarded as an important component of the interview, we know very little about its communicative impact and the ways in which it is implemented by practitioners. The psychological construct of rapport itself is not well understood - never mind the benefits of its practical applications. This chapter therefore will attempt to examine the research carried out to date on the psychological components of rapport, and how rapport building is currently carried out by practitioners working with children. It will highlight some areas that require further investigation, and finally it will outline a possible collaborative play approach to rapport building, that may be of benefit for children’s communication during forensic interviews. The argument for the potential of play rapport will be grounded in the evidence presented throughout the first two introductory chapters, and investigations of its effectiveness are carried out in chapters 4 to 6.

**2.2 Rapport as a psychological construct**

When the general concept of rapport is mentioned, the majority of people understand to an extent what is being referred to (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). We can all think of a time where someone has tried to build a rapport with us, e.g. doctors with patients, car salesmen with customers, meeting someone for the first time etc. But rapport’s actual meaning however, and the way in which it is operationalized, is not so clearly defined (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). The word rapport itself has its origins in 17th century France, and the dictionary definition of rapport describes it as a close and harmonious relationship, in which the people or groups concerned, understand each other’s feelings or ideas and communicate with each other well (Gilmour et al., 2002). According to rapport theorists, it is important to note that rapport does not exist within a single individual, but it applies to the quality of a relationship between two or more people (Bernieri, 2005). Its primary concern is with the relationship between people involved in an interaction. It is not an emotion or attitude towards someone - it is a social psychological phenomenon that must be considered at the group level (Bernieri, 2005). Often it is described as being gestalt in nature because it can be experienced, but it is difficult to pinpoint the exact behaviours that provide evidence for the experience (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Participants will say “we just clicked” or “we had great chemistry” when describing rapport interactions (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Nevertheless, when you ask them to explain exactly what they mean by this, they often struggle to put it into words. It seems that with the construct of rapport we know what it means in terms of an interaction’s quality, but have limited understanding of its indicators.

**2.2.1 Rapport components**

Through rigorous examination of the relevant literature Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1987, 1990) identified the components of rapport. It is thought to incorporate three parts: mutual attention, positivity and co-ordination (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Taking each of these in turn, during interactions consisting of high rapport, participants become increasingly involved with each other and they direct their focus towards the other person (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). They appear intensely interested in what the other person says or does. This cohesiveness and focus is what leads to mutual attention. The second component, positivity, is more commonly associated with rapport. Interactants often feel a mutual friendliness with the other person, and feel encouraged and upbeat as a result of the communication (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). The connection achieved through the interaction is what leads to feelings of positivity. The final component is coordination. As mentioned above definitions of rapport often incorporate the words ‘harmony’ and ‘balance’. Behaviour and movements during rapport interactions tend to go smoothly and have been described as analogous to the synchronization of members of an orchestra (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Each interactant is in tune with the behaviour of the other, and as a result they tend to mirror and respond well to each other’s communicative needs.

***The developmental trajectory of rapport***

Interestingly, although the presence of the three essential components does not change, the importance of each component differs depending on the status of the relationship (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). In other words the length of time the participants have known each other tends to frame their expectations about appropriate behaviour. According to Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) this relationship development is more important for positivity and coordination than it is for attention. Initial encounters are filled with social norms and behavioural conventions, where we tend to be more respectful and polite because we are aware that our behaviour is being evaluated, and may impact upon future interactions (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). As such at this stage in the relationship, the developing rapport should consist of large amounts of positivity. Here the participants are trying to convey a positive initial impression to each other and as a result these interactions are often warm and friendly. Those engaging in later interactions however, may have a higher expectation about coordination. Due to experience with the other person the interaction should run more smoothly and behaviours should be less awkward (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Early encounters would not be expected to be as well synchronized as the participants would lack experience with each another. Finally, positivity would not be as essential in a later interaction where participants are less concerned about impression management, and have more of a stable perception of the other person’s character traits (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990).

It is more difficult to weigh the relative importance of mutual attention throughout the course of a relationship (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Theorists argue it is equally significant in early and later interactions. Early on participants should engage in a large amount of mutual attention as they want to appear attentive to the other person. Avoidance of eye contact or looking elsewhere may be perceived as disinterest, and would tend to leave a negative impression (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003). On the other hand, later in the relationship, levels of mutual attention would also be high as participants have built a stronger relationship with each other and have mutuality in their relationship goals (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Figure 1 demonstrates the developmental trajectory of the three rapport components dependent upon the relationship stage.

Attention

Positivity

Coordination

Time of Interaction

Importance for Rapport

Early

Late

***Figure 2.1.* Relative importance of the three components of rapport from early to late interactions, taken from Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal, 1990.**

This framework is interesting for forensic interviews as they can sometimes differ with regards to how well the interviewers know the children. Often children come into regular contact with the authorities and may have met the interviewer a number of times. For others, the experience is the only time they have ever had contact with the police or social work services, and is their first encounter with the interviewer. With regards to the experimental research in the current thesis the interviewer did not know any of the children previously, and so the interactions will be considered from the viewpoint of an early encounter. According to this model therefore, initial encounters would be expected to demonstrate greater positivity and mutual attention, and less coordination. The differences that may emerge for rapport when a child’s encounter is with a familiar interviewer will be considered in the discussion section of the experimental chapters.

***How are the three rapport components measured?***

The supposed gestalt nature of rapport introduces the problem of deciding how to measure this social construct. One of the first approaches was to use the measure of self-report (Bernieri, Davis, Rosenthal, & Knee, 1994). An 18 item rapport questionnaire was developed that asked each participant to rate the interaction they had experienced with the other person on a scale from 0 to 8. The words used were derived from the three rapport components outlined by Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990), e.g. ‘focused’ for mutual attention, ‘harmonious’ for coordination, and ‘friendly’ for positivity etc. (Bernieri et al., 1994). The rating had to be based on the interaction, as rapport exists between and not within participants (Bernieri, 2005). As such, the participants did not just rate themselves or the other person, but the interaction as a whole. The self-report measure was initially investigated with pairs of participants who appeared to have established rapport. Factor analysis carried out on the information gathered produced three factors that represented the three theorized elements of rapport (attention, positivity and coordination, for more information see Bernieri et al., 1994; Bernieri, 2005). Nevertheless, the agreement between participants rating rapport is not particularly high (*r* < .40), indicating the measure may not be reliable (Bernieri, 2005).

The next stage of research focused on trying to establish a set of objective indicators for rapport that could be measured by observation of interactions (Bernieri, Gillis, Davis, & Grehe, 1996). This would be of particular benefit with children from whom self-report measurements can sometimes lack validity (Thompson et al., 2007). Bernieri and colleagues (Bernieri et al., 1996) carried out a rigorous study of 50 dyadic interactions involving initial encounters between pairs across two different contexts (cooperative and adversarial). They coded more than 70 verbal and nonverbal behaviours from each video clip. A portion of the features coded were objectively definable and showed good reliability between coders, e.g. number of times legs were crossed, number of questions etc. Other behaviours were more subjective and had less internal consistency amongst the raters, therefore requiring more coders to rate the behaviour in order to be quantified reliably, e.g. expressivity. The majority of behaviours were measured in frequency or duration, e.g. head nods, eye gaze, and others were measured through time sampling, e.g. interpersonal distance (Bernieri et al., 1996; Bernieri, 2005).

Many of the behaviours measured correlated with each other, and through principal components analysis the initial 70 behaviours were reduced to a smaller set of composite variables. Proximity for example was a composite measure of the average distance between the interactants’ noses, chairs and closest knees, which were sampled at different time intervals. Bernieri et al. (1996) then decided to validate the utility of these indicators. They used the 18 item self-report questionnaire with new dyads as a criterion for the nonverbal behaviours. Those behaviours that occurred most often during the interactions rated highly in rapport, according to the self-report measure, would therefore be considered the best behavioural indicators of rapport. The use of the two different information sources was thought to increase the validity of the resulting behaviours (Bernieri, 2005).

The participants in the interactions were video recorded working together on either an adversarial or cooperative task. In the adversarial context they selected a topic in which they disagreed and then they debated over the issue for ten minutes. In the cooperative interactions participants were given $20,000 worth of play money and a map, and asked to plan a trip around the world together. In general, regardless of context, high self-reports of rapport involving mutual attention, positivity and coordination were predicted by: (a) how expressive and animated the interactants appeared, (b) their physical proximity, and (c) how much synchrony/coordination they demonstrated (Bernieri et al., 1996). Interestingly, these three behaviours link with the three essential components theorized by Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990). Expressivity for example is often an indication that a person is having a positive interaction with their communicative partner. The content of the discussion doesn’t have to be a happy topic, but both interactants are focused and engaged in speaking and listening to each other, and are enthusiastic about the communication (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990).

Interesting differences did emerge across contexts. Eye contact and back channel responses (e.g. head nodding) were not as important in the map task as they were during the debates (Bernieri et al., 1996). This was perhaps because the participants’ attention was directed towards the map, and back channel responses took on less significance when the communicative partner’s attention was directed elsewhere. However, in addition to the other indicators, these would be important during forensic interviews as the child and adult are face to face when communicating.

Use of these nonverbal behaviours to measure rapport with children has so far been non-existent. Izard (1990) commented on Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal’s (1990) theory by arguing that mothers who foster a secure attachment with their infants must also demonstrate good rapport. Drawing on the attachment literature, he highlighted that mothers of securely attached infants tend to engage in mutual gazing and co-ordination of expressive behaviours with their infants. Further, a meta-analysis by De Wolff and Van Ijzendoorn (1997) also found increased levels of these behaviours between primary caregivers and securely attached children. These findings therefore imply that Bernieri et al’s (1996) nonverbal indicators of rapport could be used to measure rapport in interactions involving adults and children.

Overall, the three behaviours of expressivity, interpersonal distance and co-ordination are considered the most reliable behavioural indicators of rapport regardless of context. Bernieri (2005) however, urges that any researcher who wishes to measure rapport should consider the context of the situation. Some indicators are more useful and others more redundant in certain contexts. For example as mentioned above, we may expect less coordination in an early encounter. As such coordination may be a less valuable indicator of rapport between adults and children in a forensic interview setting, where the relationship is in its early stages and has not yet developed. Further, the focus for communication is on the child. It is they who are the main information providers and who ideally carry out the majority of the verbal communication. The interaction therefore, may already be less symmetric in nature. The child may be communicating freely, which would produce less synchrony, but would not necessarily mean there was reduced rapport. Bernieri (2005) states that the best approach for researchers would be to employ behaviours that derive from the three rapport components (positivity, mutual attention and coordination), whilst considering the status of the relationship and the situational context.

**2.3 The rapport phase in practice**

The development of rapport is often seen as an essential precursor to a successful interaction between adults and children (Carroll & Steward, 1984). A variety of settings that require communication between an adult and child more often than not incorporate a rapport building phase, e.g. during research, psychological assessment and therapy (Rotenburg et al., 2003). It is assumed to be an essential factor in eliciting communication from children about their emotional states (Carroll & Steward, 1984). Assessment of rapport’s impact has tended to focus upon research with children in clinical settings. The consistent finding is that when adults achieve rapport with children communication is improved, therapeutic alliances are established and problem behaviour is reduced (e.g. Benson, Cohen, & Buskist, 2005; McLaughlin & Carr, 2005). There tends to be no information however, on how rapport was measured and to what extent rapport was initially established. The researchers have assumed that a friendly exchange with the child must have led to rapport. A more thorough explanation of how rapport level was assessed is required before communicative benefits can be reliably attributed to established rapport.

**2.3.1 Rapport building in the child forensic interview**

Research on rapport building during the forensic interview is also quite limited. Despite having a phase dedicated to rapport building in interviews with children, the number of empirical studies investigating its impact on children’s communication has been small. Furthermore, the research that has been carried out has looked at the impact of having a rapport phase without ever measuring the extent to which rapport existed. It seems to be taken for granted that the implementation of a rapport phase is evidence for the presence of rapport. Interviewers and researchers however, are largely in agreement about the necessity of rapport building, especially in cases of alleged sexual abuse (Hershkowitz, 2009). Common sense and findings from the clinical literature indicate that attempting to build rapport with children in this setting should benefit the communication of information. In support of this, research has shown that children, who are uncommunicative at the outset of a forensic interview, are more likely to speak to the interviewer after an attempt at rapport building has been carried out (Hershkowitz, 2009; Wood, McClure, & Birch, 1996). In addition, when comparing interviews of children who disclose versus those that do not, the rapport building phase present in these interviews is of a better quality with more supportive comments from the interviewer (Hershkowitz et al., 2006). These findings tie in with the social support research showing that interviewer support can improve communication (refer to section 1.5.2). It seems the rapport building phase of the interview is the ideal place to initiate this support, providing further benefits for communication during the subsequent main part of the interview.

Research exploring the relationship between communication and the structure of the rapport building phase has been at the centre of the majority of the rapport literature. Field studies have looked at the length of the rapport phase and the number of interviewer utterances. They have found shorter rapport sessions (8 minutes or less), and those with less interviewer input were more likely to elicit longer answers from children (Davies, Westcott, & Horan, 2000). The researchers speculated that rapport phases that are too long and detailed place excessive demand on the child’s attentional resources, and can be to the detriment of information conveyed later during the main substantive phase of the interview (Davies et al., 2000). As mentioned above the communication of information about previous events can often be a socially and cognitively tiring process for children. This however, is the most important part of the interview protocol, and procedures that may detract from the child’s full participation in this should be kept to a minimum.

An alternative interpretation of these findings is that interviewers may have had less input because the child was already communicating. They did not need to scaffold the interaction because the child was a willing communicator hence the reason why there was a reduction in the interviewer’s input. Additionally, rapport sessions that have been effective should result in an increase in the child’s communication, with a subsequent decrease in the interviewer’s contribution. It is difficult therefore, to ascertain cause and effect when using correlational data. A greater understanding of the influence of the rapport phase would be achieved with experimental research that directly manipulated its content, and the level of verbal input from the investigative interviewer.

***Current rapport practice***

In terms of the standard structure of the rapport building phase with children in the UK, interviewers are encouraged to discuss neutral topics with the child, e.g. the child’s hobbies, school subjects, toys, the journey to the interview etc. The aim is to make the child feel comfortable but also to set the tone for the interview (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). The tone is established by using predominantly open questions when asking the child about the neutral topics. This allows the interviewer to assess the child’s cognitive and linguistic capabilities, and match their communicative style to the child’s presentation (Home Office, 2011). Sternberg and her colleagues (1997) evaluated the effectiveness of open questions during the rapport phase. Fourteen Israeli interviewers conducted 51 forensic interviews with alleged child victims ranging in age from 4.5 to 13. They were instructed to use either direct questions (specific-closed and focused) or open questions during the rapport phase. When finished with this phase all of the children were given the same opening statement during the main part of the interview, “now that we know each other a little bit better, I want to talk to you about the reason we are here today. I understand that something may have happened to you. I want you to tell me about it from the very beginning to the very end, as best you can remember”.

The underlying premise was that the use of the open questions would train the children how to respond to these types of questions during the interview of the alleged event. These children would have had the chance to practise responding elaborately to open prompts, and practise in using recall based retrieval strategies that can lead to more detailed and accurate information (see section 1.2.1). Results showed children in the open question condition provided 2.5 times as many words (*M* = 250) and details (*M* = 91) in response to the first substantive statement, than did children in the direct questioning condition (103 words, 38 details respectively). Children in the open condition continued to provide more information in response to questions in the remainder of the interview. Unfortunately, these responses had no effect on the interviewers’ pattern of questioning. More often than not they still reverted back to using specific-closed and forced choice questions in the interview. This is surprising as interviewers should respond to the child’s communicative presentation. If children are answering informatively to open questions, and interviewers are aware of the accuracy benefits of these responses, then why not continue to use open questions throughout the interview? (This issue is returned to in greater detail later).

The open rapport building style has provided benefits in relation to information detail but the information’s accuracy cannot be assessed from this type of research. The alleged incidents of abuse were not recorded and so it is impossible to tell whether the information communicated by the children in Sternberg et al.’s (1997) field study was correct. Consequently, Roberts, Lamb and Sternberg (2004) extended these findings by incorporating the same conditions but in a laboratory based setting. In their study, 3 to 9 year old children interacted with a photographer and were interviewed about this event a week or a month later. The findings showed all children gave more accurate information in response to the open style than the direct style of rapport building. These children were also better able to resist misleading questions.

They did not however replicate Sternberg et al.’s (1997) finding that children in the open condition gave more detailed reports. The authors attribute this difference to the length of time spent in the open rapport condition (mean 16 minutes), in comparison to the direct condition (6 minutes). Similar to the findings of Davies, Westcott and Horan (2000), the attentional resources of the children in the longer rapport phase may have been stretched, resulting in a reduction in cognitive resources available for the substantive phase. In other words, the children would have been too tired to provide comprehensive accounts. Interestingly, the rapport sessions in Sternberg et al. (1997) were an average of 7 minutes in length for both conditions, and here the differences in detail were in favour of the open condition.

The benefits of the open style of rapport may have been the result of both cognitive and social factors (Roberts et al., 2004). An open style encourages children to practise and rely on diverse retrieval strategies. No information is given by the interviewer during the questioning, unless asking the child to elaborate on information they gave previously (e.g. “you said earlier that he touched you, tell me more about that”). As such the children must actively search their own episodic recall in order to source the information. We know older children are better able to respond to these types of prompts than younger children. Nevertheless, practise at responding to these appears to have information benefits for younger children also (Lamb et al., 2011). In addition, research has shown evidence provided in response to open questions tends to be more accurate (as mentioned above). The episodic recall strategies tap memories that are more readily accessible than the recognition based retrieval required for direct questioning. It is therefore not surprising that practise at using and responding to open questions had benefits for information accuracy also. This is especially important for younger children who are typically less efficient at information processing and retrieval techniques (Ornstein, 1995). It appears from this research that an open style of rapport is a useful method for helping young children to overcome these deficits. Further, practise at open questions could have improved meta-linguistic awareness. Children lack an understanding about the importance of the interview and the necessity for elaborate accounts (see section 1.2.3). Practise at providing longer responses (which typically occur in answer to open questions), may have set the communicative tone for the children, and increased their tendency to provide exhaustive accounts.

Increased accuracy in response to misleading questions is also an important finding. This is perhaps linked with the possible socioemotional benefits of an open style of rapport building. Roberts et al. (2004) stated that the open rapport style may have created a socially supportive atmosphere for children. Due to the open nature of the questioning children usually carry out the majority of the communication. This approach would show the interviewer is listening and is interested in what the child has to say, therefore possibly increasing the child’s motivation to communicate. Furthermore, implementation of the open style of rapport is dependent on information the child has already provided. This may have shifted the perceived power imbalance in favour of the child, and made them feel that they were the knowledge providers and not the adults. The resultant empowerment could therefore have allowed the children to resist the interviewer’s suggestion. This explanation corresponds with Davis and Bottom’s (2002a, b) resistance efficacy theory. The children perceived themselves as capable informants, which may well have then decreased their suggestibility and improved their overall recall performance.

Research has also looked at the implementation of a more scripted protocol for use throughout the entire interview, called the NICHD interview protocol (National Institute of Child and Human Development, Lamb et al., 2011; Orbach, 2000). This involved operationalizing in detail interview guidelines, based on previous research findings, with the aim of facilitating the retrieval of rich and accurate accounts from children (for detailed information about this protocol refer to Lamb et al., 2011). Laboratory and field studies have shown that children’s recall has been improved by use of the NICHD method (Sternberg, Lamb, Orbach, Esplin & Mitchell, 2001). This is relevant to the new research to be presented in this thesis as the rapport building phase in this protocol now recommends a practise interview conducted in a similar manner to the open style described above. In the NICHD protocol, the pre-substantive phase is compartmentalized into various scripted components. The first is the ‘introductory phase’ where the interviewers introduce themselves, clarify the task and go over the ground rules. The rapport building phase that follows is separated into two sections. In the first the interviewer asks briefly about neutral topics in an open question format. In the second section the children are given a practise interview. They are asked to describe a recent neutral event in detail, and the interviewer asks about this event using free narrative and open prompts in much the same way as they intend on using during the main part of the interview. The aim of the first section is to build rapport between the interviewer and child, and the second allows the child to practise the retrieval of information from episodic memory. The research carried out on the NICHD protocol has not looked at the benefits of this form of the pre-substantive phase specifically, but rather the protocol as a whole. The previously described findings of Sternberg et al. (1997) and Roberts et al. (2004) are taken by the protocol’s component as evidence that this form of rapport building, and the practise interview, should improve the quality of children’s information.

Nevertheless, we have several criticisms of the above research involving the open style of rapport building. Firstly, the studies lack an appropriate control condition with which to compare the open style of rapport. We know from previous research that direct questioning typically elicits shorter answers from children (e.g. Dent & Stephenson, 1979). It is therefore possible that the findings for the open style reflect the absence of the negative effects of a direct style, as opposed to the benefits of an open approach. A different control condition, perhaps involving no rapport approach at all, would better examine the claim that an open style of rapport building leads to better communication from children. The exclusion of an appropriate control condition is understandable in field research where the omission of the entire rapport phase could be considered unethical. However, laboratory based studies could incorporate a control to investigate better the communicative impact of the rapport building phase.

Second, none of the empirical data looking at the open style or the practise interview have measured the children’s rapport levels. Perhaps this is more to do with an inaccuracy in the terminology used to describe this phase (‘establishing rapport’, Home Office, 2011; ‘rapport building’, Scottish Executive, 2011). Nevertheless, as mentioned above, the inclusion of a rapport phase is often taken as evidence in the literature that rapport has been established. No measures of rapport behaviour seem to have been taken however, to validate these claims. It would be important to see if rapport levels differ across various rapport protocols, and whether this has an impact on children’s communication in investigative interviews. The structure of the open style theoretically would provide two of the components - positivity and mutual attention. Allowing the child to communicate at length about themselves would plausibly be a positive experience for them. In addition, if the child did communicate more with the interviewer they may have been more attentive to the interviewer as a result. Similarly, the interviewer would reciprocate this focus in order to facilitate the flow of communication and demonstrate interest. No verbal or non-verbal data have been collected, it seems, that could support these hypotheses.

Third and perhaps most important, this format for rapport building is not always adhered to by current practitioners (e.g. LaRooy, Lamb, & Memon, 2010; Westcott & Kynan, 2006). Research consistently shows that many aspects of the pre-substantive phase, e.g. ground rules, practise interview, are being left out by practitioners when conducting these interviews (e.g. Westcott & Kynan, 2006). Most recently, a study by LaRooy et al. (2010) found that 87% of Scottish practitioners are failing to use an open style of rapport building at all. The authors state that this may be because the interviewers are unaware of the communicative benefits of the rapport phase, and the open style in particular (explanations for poor rapport practice will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3).

This phase was included in the investigative interviewing protocol for the purpose of building a relationship between interviewers and the children they interview (Home Office, 2011). Explaining the interview’s purpose, the ground rules and practise at responding to open prompts are all extremely important aspects of the pre-substantive phase, and adherence to these seems to improve children’s communication greatly – when compared with a direct style of questioning. However, the arguments put forward by Sternberg et al. (1997) and Roberts et al. (2004) relating to the social aspects of these techniques lack sufficient empirical support. Is the hypothesized socially supportive atmosphere actually present? Is it due to a reduction in anxiety (Mosten & Engleberg, 1992; Carter et al., 1996) or increased resistance efficacy (Davies & Bottoms, 2002a, b)? Is there evidence of rapport when using these pre-substantive protocols? Can guidance refer to it as a rapport building phase without ever investigating whether or not these protocols actually improve rapport levels?

The informational benefits found as a result of the open style of rapport building are important. However, the research showing the negative impact of socioemotional factors and the possible benefits of social support cannot be underestimated. New research needs to go one step further by providing evidence for the hypothesized underlying psychological mechanisms involved in these improvements. This would add to our current theoretical understanding of interviewer provided social support, and give us a greater insight into the psychological factors at work during the rapport phase. Measuring rapport levels in particular would give an indication of whether these protocols are successful at building a connection/relationship between the interviewer and child. All of this would allow an assessment of current rapport practice, and hopefully enhance it.

**2.4 Alternative rapport building strategies**

It is clear from the wealth of information presented so far in this thesis, that research looking at child forensic interviewing has resulted in a substantiated progression in how these interviews are conducted. Findings have led to the establishment of a more child centred and structured protocol for interviewing child witnesses, which in turn has produced better quality evidence from children (Lamb et al., 2011). As well as establishing a protocol based on research evidence, interview guidelines also emphasise the importance of flexibility in practice (Home Office, 2011). Yes, it would appear that on the whole certain procedures reliably produce better quality evidence from children, e.g. open ended questioning. Nevertheless, interviewers are encouraged to recognize that each child is an individual with different personality traits and personal experiences, that will dictate how they respond to certain procedures (the interviewer’s flexible approach will be covered in greater detail in chapter 3). As such, training and documentation issued to practitioners are for guidance only. It is up to the interviewer to adapt these to accommodate the child’s particular cognitive and social needs. Consequently, practitioners are always looking for new, interesting and effective ways in which to approach these interviews, but always with evidence quality as a high priority (Lamb & Brown, 2006).

Despite managing to achieve this for the main part of the interview (refer to sections 1.2.2 and 1.2.3 on alternative retrieval strategies), this aim cannot be extended to the rapport phase. As stated by Hershkowitz (2009), only a small number of studies have empirically investigated alternative styles of rapport building. From a forensic and evidential point of view, this is understandable as the substantive phase is the focal point of the entire interview, and is often in child sexual abuse cases, the only form of evidence available (Lamb & Brown, 2006). However, from a child development perspective, the quality of the initial interaction could impact greatly upon subsequent communication with children during the remainder of the interview (e.g. see Hershkowitz, 2009; Hershkowitz et al., 2006; Wood et al., 1996).

In social development humans are taught from an early age the importance of initial impressions with others, and the appropriate positive behaviours that must be carried out to ensure that communication with others is maintained (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003). In other words when we aim to open up the channels of communication with someone we can appreciate how rapport may help us to achieve this and to help maintain such communication (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Child psychologists would argue that it is even more important with children for many of the cognitive and socioemotional reasons described above, e.g. lack of understanding about the importance of an interview, feeling intimidated by the adult authority figure etc. Some children may require the facilitative effects of rapport to initiate the flow of communication. Finally, child forensic interview settings add another dynamic to the situation where often the children are communicating information of a sensitive nature (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003). As such we would expect their motivations to communicate to be even less (Lamb & Brown, 2006). Overall then, the significance of the rapport phase, from a developmental and a psychological perspective, should not be underestimated. Therefore, the lack of attention to the rapport building phase in empirical research, and in training (for evidence of this see chapter 3) needs to be addressed.

**2.4.1 Play rapport**

Alternative approaches to rapport building have been implemented in other settings involving adult-child dyads. One particular method has been the use of play to assist in the establishment of rapport between therapists and children during psychotherapy. Hudak (2000) investigated the use of ball play within this clinical setting, in which the therapist and child threw or kicked the ball to each other. In therapy children are often reluctant, and have pre-conceived notions and apprehensions about the expected communication (Hudak, 2000). These thought processes are said to inhibit children’s motivation to communicate (Hudak, 2000). Hudak states that ball play works as a tool for rapport as the therapist shows interest in the ‘child’s world’. Consequently, the child’s perception of the adult as an authority figure is altered. Hudak (2000) states this redresses the typical power imbalance present in these interactions, and this in turn reduces the child’s anxiety about the situation and encourages communication (Carter et al., 1996; Davis & Bottoms, 2002a, b). This psychological chain of events is hypothetical however, as no measures of anxiety have been collected in relation to ball play.

This theory nonetheless, can be supported indirectly in a study by Barnett and Storm (1991) which investigated the effects of play on children’s anxiety levels. They induced a conflict situation in preschool children and manipulated whether they played during the situation or not. There was a significant decrease in anxiety after play as measured by pre and post physiological and behavioural measures of anxiety and emotional displeasure (Barnett & Storm, 1991). It would appear that the play acted as a buffer to the negative situation and decreased children’s anxiety levels. As such it seems possible that play, when used as a tool to facilitate rapport, could reduce children’s anxiety about the situation.

Interestingly, often the content of the play behaviour in Barnett and Storm’s study (1991) was found to relate to the situation devised by the experimenters. The idea that children can work through their stress and trauma using play is central to the implementation of play therapy (Phillips, 1985). Play therapy is a clinical approach and intervention for children with a wide variety of emotional and behavioural problems, including child abuse (Phillips, 1985). During play therapy children attempt to understand the world and transform reality through developing symbolic representations of that world (Piaget, 1962). In other words, the children learn to master their anxiety or guilt about their experiences, by repeatedly recreating the situation they have been exposed to, through the use of play (Howe & Silvern, 1981).

Play as a method for establishing rapport in forensic interviews with children has not been empirically investigated and published. Nevertheless, based on the findings from the clinical literature it could possibly be a useful addition to the current rapport protocol. Developmentally it seems a logical approach with school aged children, as play is a vital part of children’s lives (White & Allers, 1994). During their development it is a spontaneous and natural behaviour in which children learn to interact with others (White & Allers, 1994). As such it could be a natural and developmentally appropriate way for the interviewer to first engage with the child. Play behaviour during initial interactions is typically present when children communicate with *other* children. Additionally, collaborative play can often occur between children and primary caregivers, and this mode of interaction is not entirely uncommon for children.

Considering the regular occurrence of play in children’s lives it may be somewhat surprising that it is not more often used during rapport building in forensic interviews. The setting for the interview quite often contains a variety of toys, whether in an interview suite (Home Office, 2007), the child’s school or even the child’s home (Scottish Executive, 2011). Nevertheless, play is not actively encouraged during training or in practice guidelines. Although not explicitly stated, this is possibly because it is often associated with the negative effects of anatomical dolls (see section 1.2.2). As mentioned previously, this nonverbal prop has been found to increase fantasy in children and encourage confabulations (e.g. Everson & Boat, 1997). Through observation of the doll’s external genitalia they are said to stimulate sexual play and sexual fantasy in children, and lead to the reporting of inaccurate information (Everson & Boat, 1997). Indeed *any* technique or prop that poses a risk for generating fantasy in children’s accounts is strongly criticized in the child investigative interviewing literature, and rightly so (Everson & Boat, 1997). Therefore the notion of play in the interview may create anxiety in the interviewer about the possibility of increased inaccuracy through stimulation of children’s fantasy.

Nevertheless, the author proposes that play could be used during the rapport building phase as a tool to facilitate rapport. Here the play would not be used as a mechanism to assist disclosure, only as a mechanism to increase the interaction, and therefore communication between the interviewer and child. Critics may argue that this could still generate fantasy in the child’s account, but this may not occur for two reasons: (1) the type of play used will be constructive play and (2) the play is carried out in the rapport session only. With reference to the first point, there are many types of play that children can engage in e.g. social play, pretend play, game play, to name but a few (Davy & Gallagher, 2006). The method of play rapport used in the present thesis would involve constructive play between the interviewer and child. Constructive play involves manipulating the environment to create something. Children can use building blocks and other structural equipment, collage, art materials, beads and magnets, to create an object or pattern (Takhvav & Smith, 1990). This form of play was selected as no pretend play is involved, which may lead to fantasy, and the interviewer and child can work *together* to create something, e.g. a pattern with magnets, a car from play materials or even a jigsaw (more information about the operation of play rapport is covered in chapter 4).

Second, the play is confined to the rapport session only. One of the benefits of constructive play is that it has an end goal. Once the jigsaw or pattern is complete, a sense of accomplishment is reached (Takhvav & Smith, 1990) and it may not encourage continued play. The tasks would be simple, age appropriate and achievable within the 5-10 minute time period normally set aside for rapport building (Davies et al., 2000). Consequently, no play would be carried forward to the substantive phase of the interview. The play is therefore not intended as a tool to assist the communication of experiences, like the anatomical dolls. Instead it is a tool for the rapport phase only, used to facilitate rapport. The play tasks have been designed to ensure that very little, if any, fantasy would be involved. Nevertheless, this cannot be said with any certainty. The current research will therefore look at whether or not play rapport affects the amount of accurate and inaccurate information, and the number of intrusions given by children in order to address this concern (see chapters 4 & 5).

**2.4.2 The theoretical basis for play rapport**

Despite never having been empirically investigated, there are a number of theoretical reasons why play rapport may increase rapport and facilitate communication between interviewers and children during investigative interviews. One of the primary underlying principles is that it allows the child and interviewer to work together to complete the task. As mentioned previously, children often rely on the adult as the information provider during communicative interactions for two reasons: (1) children are unaware of the necessity for elaborate accounts and (2) they may feel intimidated by the adult authority figure which inhibits their communication (see sections 1.2.3 and 1.3.1). By working collaboratively the child would be contributing to the completion of the task, therefore setting the tone for the interview that what they say and what they do, plays an integral part in the success of the interaction. This would hopefully extend to the main substantive phase of the interview resulting in greater input from the child. This is related to the concept of meta-linguistic awareness (Lamb & Brown, 2006; Roberts et al., 2004; Saywitz & Synder, 1996). The children may gain a greater appreciation of their expected contribution to the interaction, and continue with this level of participation when communicating information in the substantive phase of the interview.

In addition, similar to the open style of rapport building, it may also help redress the power asymmetry (e.g. Sternberg et al., 1997). The concept of play is something that children are comfortable and familiar with (Phillips, 1985). They may feel more confident contributing to the interaction this way rather than through verbal communication only. An increase in the level of input may lead to a greater increase in the child’s confidence. Research from the social support literature has shown that altering the child’s perception of their efficacy has benefits in terms of their information accuracy and resistance to suggestion (e.g. Carter et al., 1996; Davies & Bottoms, 2002a, b). It is theoretically possible that play rapport may have similar effects for communication. Additionally, by witnessing the interviewer’s willingness to engage in play, a fun and typically childlike activity, the child may reassess their perception of the adult as one of authority. The interviewer would be demonstrating their readiness to communicate on the child’s level and respond to the child’s needs.

Based on the findings that play behaviour (Barnett & Storm, 1991) and social support (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007) reduce anxiety, play rapport may have similar benefits. As mentioned previously children can view the interview as an unpleasant experience (Malloy et al., 2011). Play would make the ‘getting to know you’ part of the interaction a little less unpleasant and hopefully reduce any of the child’s previous apprehensions. In addition, as play rapport combines *both* play and a socially supportive atmosphere, it seems logical to assume that it would have this effect. We know from previous research that anxiety is a communication inhibiter (Almerigogna et al., 2007) and it can also impede children’s recall of events (e.g. Nathanson & Saywitz, 2003). Consequently, the resultant reduction in anxiety may produce improvements in not only the child’s motivation to communicate, but also their memory ability. Unlike the open style of rapport, play rapport does not focus on consolidating children’s recall, but it could still improve their memory by acting as a buffer to the negative effects of anxiety.

Purely from a rapport perspective, play rapport may contain the three essential rapport components (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). *Positivity* would be present as play is typically viewed as a fun activity for children, and the successful completion of a task with the interviewer would hopefully create a positive experience for the child. Play rapport would also automatically lead to an increase in *mutual attention,* as both the interviewer and child would be focused on the play materials. Finally, the presence of *coordination* is a little less predictable. As discussed in section 2.2, coordination is less likely than the other two components to be present during the early stages of a relationship. However, working together to complete the task may result in an increase in this behaviour, as both interactants become accustomed to the other person’s systematic contribution to the task. The face to face communication required for the main part of the interview is a little different in terms of communication format. Nonetheless, the establishment of rapport, as a result of these three components, may continue on during the remainder of the interview. Previous research has shown the communicative benefits of attempting rapport (e.g. Hershkowitz, 2009; Wood et al., 1996) and therefore it is possible to expect similar findings with play rapport.

Finally, play rapport could serve to reduce the negative effects of increased social intimacy (Doherty-Sneddon & McAuley, 2000). Although children are used to communicating with adults, communication in this setting is different for three reasons: (1) the interviewer is more often than not unfamiliar to the child, (2) direct face to face communication in an interview setting is something they may not have experienced before, and (3) the content of the information expected from the child is often intimate in nature, especially in cases of alleged abuse (e.g. Carter et al., 1996; Doherty-Sneddon & McAuley, 2000). It therefore seems that forensic interviews are a situational context in which increased social intimacy is inevitable, and due to the three issues outlined above, this can often cause feelings of intimidation and anxiety for the child (Almerigogna et al., 2007; Carter et al., 1996; Goodman et al., 1991).

One way in which humans display their level of social intimacy in a relationship is through their non-verbal behaviour (Argyle & Dean, 1965; Doherty-Sneddon, 2003). When we like or are more comfortable with someone we increase our engagement in a number of behaviours, e.g. we increase our bodily proximity by leaning forwards, and we are involved in more mutual eye contact with the other person (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003). When we are uncomfortable with someone we can exhibit the opposite of these behaviours. According to Argyle and Dean (1965), within every social encounter there are always approach and avoidance forces at work which interact with the status of the relationship. We like to be involved with other people but at the same time resist them perhaps because of fear of rejection or hostility (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003). According to equilibrium theory (Argyle & Dean, 1965), there is a certain intimacy distance exhibited where the motivation to approach another person is balanced by our motivation to avoid them. In these interactions the intimacy distance is in equilibrium and each interactant feels comfortable. The level of social intimacy is demonstrated by nonverbal behaviour and is moderated by it. If the level of intimacy changes, e.g. someone gazes at you too much, this upsets the equilibrium. We then feel uncomfortable and modify our behaviour to compensate for this change, and once again maintain an equilibrium (e.g. by looking away, Argyle & Dean, 1965; Doherty-Sneddon, 2003).

During the rapport phase of forensic interviews more often than not the relationship is in its early stages, and it is possible that the face to face communication required by the open style of rapport building is not suitable for the level of intimacy. Research has shown that an awareness of correct intimacy behaviour is evident in children as young as 3 years old (Gooch, 1999). In a study by Gooch (1999), children were more likely to initiate conversation when seated 95cm away from an adult than 48cm. These children also engaged in fewer self-touching behaviours (a sign of anxiety, Souza-Poza & Rohrberg, 1972). The results show that the children were more comfortable when seated a distance away. In addition, pre-schoolers’ approach distance with an unfamiliar adult reduces when an adult is looking away, but increases when the adult is looking at them (Eberts & Lepper, 1975). Consequently, even pre-school children respond to changes in social distance.

Based on these principles play rapport therefore may be more conducive to the initial encounter. Here the interviewer and child do not have to engage in as much eye contact as their attention is directed towards the task. Their bodily proximity is increased but the play task materials may act as a barrier between the interviewer and child, therefore compensating the increase in proximity and social intimacy. In addition, leaning forward may be required but once again this is moderated by the materials and the reduction in eye contact. Play may act as a communication and intimacy facilitator where the child has to increase their intimacy distance (by playing and in readiness for the interview), but this is balanced by the physical requirements of the play task.

***Summary***

Rapport is a psychological construct that exists between two or more people and contains three main components: positivity, mutual attention and coordination. Several nonverbal indicators have been investigated that can be used to measure rapport. Research on the presence of rapport itself seems to have never been examined in the context of child forensic interviews. Both cognitive and social theories have been suggested as explanations for the communication improvements found from open rapport. Nevertheless, these theories require experimental support. Finally, a play method of rapport building has been used in other clinical contexts but its use during forensic interviews has not resulted in published research. Section 2.4.2 above outlines the theoretical reasons why this method may be effective in facilitating rapport and communication during child investigative interviews. These theories will be returned to throughout the thesis in attempt to explain the effects found for play rapport.

**2.5 Thesis rationale and general aims**

These two opening chapters have sought to outline the main theories, and evidence relating to child forensic interviewing that are most pertinent to the present thesis. Some of these theoretical debates and references will be discussed in greater detail in the relevant experimental chapters. The contribution of psychological research to our understanding of communication during child investigative interviews cannot be underestimated. Further, this research is the solid foundation upon which current national and international guidance has been built. The research has examined children’s cognitive development and the social characteristics of the interview, and how these impact upon the elicitation of evidence.

The focus however, has predominantly been upon the main substantive phase of the interview. The rapport building component has been largely neglected despite claims that it is of critical importance to the interview (Hershkowitz, 2009). Both practitioners and researchers alike have very little understanding of what goes on during the rapport phase, and the effects this has upon children’s communication. Furthermore, there is even less of an appreciation of whether current rapport protocols do in fact lead to rapport and impact upon children’s communication. The existing rapport method used in the UK is based on an open style of questioning and is thought to improve children’s narrative performance. Nevertheless, the benefits attributed to this method are undermined by inappropriate control conditions, and the hypothesized underlying principles lack field or experimental data. Perhaps of even greater significance, the open style is not being adhered to by practitioners. Due to the diversity in children’s personalities and experiences, forensic interviewers are always searching for alternative techniques that can provide a more flexible approach to interviewing children. As such a collaborative play method of rapport building has been devised that may be useful in increasing rapport between interviewers and children, and subsequently facilitating communication.

The research presented in this thesis aims to provide a more comprehensive account of the effectiveness of various rapport building protocols during mock forensic interviews with children. In particular, it sets out to design and investigate the efficacy of a new collaborative play method of rapport building. The success of the rapport protocols are measured by their impact upon communication and rapport. Additionally, psychological theories for benefits and differences found will be discussed in light of the research described in chapters 1 and 2. The first line of enquiry is a qualitative study carried out with Scottish practitioners aimed to explore their experiences and views of rapport building in child forensic interviews, and rapport’s communicative impact. It will provide a rich source of information on the decision making processes involved during the rapport stage, and the essential factors that contribute to the child’s communication. The method of analysis is grounded theory which results in an overall explanatory theory about the relationship between rapport building and children’s communication. The practitioners are also asked about the use of play during rapport building. The resultant theory and the practitioners’ responses to play are used to help design the play rapport method, and decide how it is implemented in the subsequent experimental research.

The second study is a basic experimental investigation in which play rapport is compared to a control condition involving no rapport building. The aim is to assess the impact of play rapport on rapport levels and communication in adult-child dyads. Different formats of constructive play are also evaluated in order to establish a set of play tasks that could be used for boys and girls, and across the age range of 6-14. It also provides the first opportunity to use Bernieri et al’s (1996) nonverbal indicators of rapport in a communicative setting with children.

The second experimental study builds on the findings of the previous study, by testing the effects of play rapport on rapport and communication during mock forensic interviews. Play rapport is also compared to the open style of rapport building. As mentioned previously, this is the current method used in the rapport phase in the UK. It is believed to have extensive communicative benefits, and it would be interesting to compare the effectiveness of both approaches. Similar levels of success would therefore highlight that play rapport could be an alternative/additional approach to the open style of rapport building. Finally, a control no rapport condition is included in the experiment design to allow us to investigate the impact of the rapport building phase overall, and to see whether previous benefits attributed to the open style are as a result of an inadequate comparison condition (direct style, see section 2.3.1 above).

The final study aims to explore one of the hypothesized theoretical factors that contribute to improvements in children’s communication. Previous research found social support can reduce children’s anxiety levels and increase their resistance to suggestion. Rapport building is also a form of social support in the forensic interview. Furthermore, practitioners have stated they believe anxiety reduction is a central process in the relationship between rapport and communication (see chapter 3). This study therefore will examine empirically whether the rapport phase also affects children’s anxiety levels, and whether this impacts upon the quality of children’s information. In addition, play is thought to buffer the effects of anxiety, and the study will ascertain whether improvements in children’s communication as a result of play rapport, may be related to this outcome also. Overall, the findings will contribute to our theoretical understanding of both the rapport building phase in general and play rapport.

**Chapter Three**

**The Relationship Between the Rapport Phase and Children’s Communication: The Perspectives of Practitioners**

**3.1 Introduction**

The main aim of this thesis is to explore the impact of various rapport building protocols on children’s communication during forensic interviews. This first empirical chapter sets the foundation for this aim by consulting with practitioners on their experiences with **the rapport building phase** in this setting. Chapter 2 highlighted that we have very little research based information on what actually goes on during the rapport building phase, and its communicative impact. As such, it is difficult to decide how best to examine rapport and design a tool to facilitate it. Previously, research in forensic interviewing operated with a dichotomy between practitioners and researchers. However, the past 5-10 years have demonstrated a movement towards these groups working together to improve the validity and rigour involved in this field of research (<http://www.iiirg.org/>). It therefore seemed logical to begin the inquiry with a focus on practitioners’ opinions and experiences of the rapport building phase. They are directly involved in the rapport phase and are arguably the best source of information on its operation. Furthermore, division of a new rapport protocol that did not consider practitioner opinion could lead to an approach that lacked feasibility and confidence from its main operators.

**3.1.1 History of child interview guidelines in the UK**

As mentioned previously the majority of empirical literature has tended to focus upon the main substantive phase of the interview instead (Hershkowitz, 2009). Some of the research carried out that can offer insight into rapport practice stems from studies investigating interviewer practice during the forensic interview as a whole. These studies have tended to focus upon assessing practitioner adherence to interview training and guidelines. Before introducing research that offers insight into interview and rapport practice, it would be beneficial to first give a brief overview of the history of the current UK interview protocol.

An increased awareness of child abuse over the past 30 years, particularly through media exposure, led to greater interest in the processes involved in criminally investigating child abuse (Saywitz, 2002). Forensic interviews with children are often the first evidential port of call for investigators, and due to the secretive nature of the crime, they are frequently the only form of evidence available (Hershkowitz et al., 2006). Consequently, the importance of these interviews resulted in legislative changes to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of this procedure in providing evidence. One of the most important reforms in England and Wales was the decision to video record these interviews, with the aim of improving the detail and accuracy of the evidence gathered, and providing the opportunity for the video recording to be used as the child’s evidence in chief during court proceedings (Davies, Wilson, Mitchell & Milsom, 1995).

As a result, the protocol for the interviewing of child witnesses was revised and government guidance on how to interview children for criminal proceedings was issued in the form of the 1992 *Memorandum of Good Practice* (Davies et al., 1995). Consequently, these video recordings would increase the visibility of forensic interview technique. Therefore stringent guidance on appropriate technique when eliciting evidence from children was essential. This was again revised in 2002 and re-introduced as *Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance for Vulnerable or Intimidated Witnesses, Including Children* (Home Office, 2002). The new document reflected much of the guidance from the Memorandum but benefited from recent research on children and the criminal justice process. This has since been revised another two times and was most recently updated in 2011 (Home Office, 2011). The protocol incorporates a four phased approach involving rapport, free narrative, questioning and closure. The theoretical and empirical bases for these phases have been explained during the first two chapters of this thesis. For a more detailed outline of the protocol please refer to Appendix A.

***Rapport technique in the Memorandum of Good Practice***

Davies et al. (1995) investigated the *Memorandum’s* effectiveness during its first 2 years of practice by analysing 40 videotaped interviews. The rapport building phase was generally well performed, but in 25% of the interviews the allegation was mentioned during rapport. In addition, assessment of the child’s ability to distinguish between truth and lies was conducted during the closure phase rather than the rapport phase, contrary to best practice (refer to Appendix A). Therefore, although the correct components were included, they were not always necessarily carried out in the correct order. The interviewer should demonstrate a certain degree of flexibility with the protocol, but changes like these may affect the credibility of the child’s information during court proceedings (Davies et al., 1995).

In addition, in their study of rapport practice, Warren, Woodall, Hunt and Perry (1996) found that although interviewers attempted to build rapport with the child, they very rarely carried out an open style of rapport building. As mentioned in chapter 1, this can improve the overall detail and accuracy of children’s memory performance by giving children the opportunity to rehearse elaborate responses and recall strategies (Roberts et al., 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997). Additionally, some aspects of the ground rules were omitted. This is considered a crucial part of the introductory phase which is hypothesized to produce communicative benefits for children, including increasing the child’s awareness that correction of the interviewer’s mistakes is permitted. It is possible that exclusion of this may increase children’s suggestibility and decrease their ability to resist misinformation (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007; Davis & Bottoms, 2002a, b).

In a study by Westcott and Kynan (2006) 70 videotaped transcripts of *Memorandum* interviews involving children from 7 to 12 years old from England and Wales were coded. A similar pattern of results to Davies et al. (1995) was found with the rapport phase rarely comprising all of the necessary components. In addition, the overall quality of the rapport phase was rated as poor. The authors stated the implementation of rapport was a ‘mechanical’ exercise with interviewers going through the procedure, but failing to use it as an opportunity to build a relationship with the child. They tended to use a list of the same neutral questions across each of the interviews. Concerns with this ‘utility quiz’ (e.g. Mykleburst & Alison, 2000) are that children may experience a sense of failure and boredom at the very beginning of the interview, which could have a lasting impact throughout (Wood et al., 1996). Explanations for these findings could be the lack of emphasis on the rapport building phase during training and in guidelines (La Rooy et al., 2010). With little research and focus on this area perhaps interviewers are failing to appreciate its function, and possible importance for facilitating communication. The current research aimed to explore this issue further by empirically investigating practitioner opinion of the rapport phase.

**3.1.2 Interview practice of Scottish practitioners**

Research findings from psychology have been translated into interview guidelines across a number of different countries. As well as the aforementioned *Memorandum of Good Practice* (Home Office, 1992), there is also *The Evidence of Children and other Vulnerable Witnesses* (Law Commission, 1997), *Achieving Best Evidence* (Home Office 2002, 2007, 2011), *The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development Protocol* (NICHD, Orbach et al., 2000), and the *Guidance for Interviewing Child Witnesses and Victims in Scotland* (Scottish Executive, 2003, 2011). The latter is of particular relevance for the current thesis as the practitioners involved in the present study were police officers and social workers from Scotland. The Scottish guidelines are derived from evidence based protocols such as *Achieving Best Evidence* and the *NICHD* (LaRooy et al., 2010)*.* In Scotland the interviews are carried out jointly by a police officer and social worker. With respect to training, Scottish practitioners attend a week long course run by experienced interviewers and are then permitted to carry out joint interviews with children (Scottish Executive, 2011). The main components of the training are: familiarisation with the interview guidelines, practice interviews with trained actors, teaching of the underlying developmental issues when interviewing children, and learning about the role of the interviewer during criminal proceedings (LaRooy et al., 2010). The protocol is much the same as is outlined in *Achieving Best Evidence* (Home Office, 2007, 2011) and can be viewed in Appendix A. The explicit guidance given to Scottish practitioners about the rapport phase can be found in Appendix B.

The only study to date that has looked at the interview practice of investigative interviewers in Scotland was carried out recently by LaRooy et al. (2010). They surveyed 91 practicing police officers from forces across Scotland about how well they adhered to the Scottish Guidelines. Positive findings were that 97% of interviewers said they had received national training and 97% believed this to be sufficient for effective practice. Eighty-eight percent stated they believed their interview technique permitted a full and detailed disclosure from children. These findings demonstrate confidence and authority in their interview practice and training. Nevertheless, 78% had received no refresher training, formal feedback of interview quality was rare and 20% admitted to rarely using open questions to elicit information from children. Due to previous research demonstrating that interview quality declines after training (Warren et al., 1996), these findings are troubling as they may indicate misplaced confidence in the overall quality of practitioners’ interviews. In addition, the large number of practitioners failing to use open questions is particularly problematic, as we know these types of prompts typically elicit more detailed and accurate information from children (e.g. Roberts et al., 2004). If an open style is not being utilised then other forms of questioning, e.g. specific-closed and forced choice questions, are being used which can lead to less accurate and credible information production, especially from younger children (e.g. Dent & Stephenson, 1979).

With respect to the rapport phase specifically, the findings were even less encouraging. Seventy-nine percent stated they always carried out rapport building but only 58.9% covered the ground rules. Sixty percent **never** used the practise interview and 26.7% used it rarely. The fact that the rapport phase is being carried out but doesn’t often involve a practise interview means we have a lack of understanding about the methods actually employed by interviewers to establish rapport with children. In terms of perceptions on rapport’s effectiveness 38.5% rated it as quite effective and 49.5% very effective. For the practise interview 45.2% rated it as not very effective and 32.3% as quite effective. Interestingly, only 31 out of the 91 officers ‘surveyed answered questions about the perceived effectiveness of the practise interview overall. Therefore, the interviewers are invested in the concept of a rapport building phase, but not the use of a practise interview during it.

According to the Scottish guidelines rapport can be carried out by asking children about neutral topics using an open style of questioning (Scottish Executive, 2011). It can only be assumed that this is the format of the rapport being carried out, but without a question in the survey that specifically addresses this we cannot know for sure. More significantly, why are police officers not carrying out the practise interview or perceiving it as effective? The many cognitive and social benefits of this method of introduction are therefore not being put into practice (Orbach et al., 2000; Roberts et al., 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997). LaRooy et al. (2010) attribute these findings to a lack of awareness on the part of interviewers about the possible communicative implications of a practise interview. This could be related to the emphasis in training on the free recall and questioning phases. Also, perhaps the interviewers do not perceive the practise interview as a separate component to rapport building; one that has implications for memory performance as well as for building a relationship with the child (LaRooy et al., 2010). However, without addressing these issues in more detail with practitioners it is not possible to examine the validity of these explanations.

**3.1.3 Qualitative interviews with Scottish practitioners**

Consequently, the present study adopted a qualitative approach to investigating Scottish interviewers’ rapport practice. Semi-structured interviews with practitioners were carried out to permit a detailed exploration of their perceptions and experiences of the rapport building phase. A grounded theory method of analysis was used as this type of analysis is suited to topics in which relatively little is known about the area; and the researcher aimed to develop new theories about the phenomenon under investigation (Payne, 2007). Detailed description of the method is given in section 3.2. However, transparency in the use of qualitative research methods is often cited as an indicator of its scientific merit (Smith, 1997). As such, some of the factors that should be considered when evaluating this qualitative study will now briefly be explained.

***The purpose of the research***

There are a number of different approaches to collecting and analysing qualitative data and it is important that the researcher gives due consideration to the particular focus of the research before deciding on the methodology (Payne, 2007). The chosen approach must fully answer the research question which in this study was, ‘what is the communicative impact of the rapport building phase in child forensic interviews?’ This question requires contextual evidence, where the participants provide information on their experiences and perceptions of rapport building, and generative evidence, where the experiences are described with reference to their approach to rapport building and the factors that impact upon its effectiveness (Hammersley, 1997). The research did not attempt to evaluate rapport practice with regards to communication, but instead attempted to produce a theory that offers insight into the link between rapport building and communication.

***The participant population***

The selection of participants is based on the overall aims of the research (Payne, 2007). The aim was to explore what happens during rapport practice and how this affects communication; the author spoke to the practitioners involved and gained an understanding of their perspectives on the decision making and the effects of those decisions. Another option would have been to interview children who had previously participated in forensic interviews, but they would only be able to offer a perspective based on a single experience, and are not involved in adjusting the rapport phase for the purpose of communication. The interviewers’ sole focus is the facilitation of communication and would arguably offer greater insight into ways in which this is achieved. In addition, practitioners have a good understanding of whether play rapport would work in this setting and their opinions and experiences would improve its design and implementation.

Qualitative research typically involves a small number of participants as the data does not have to be quantitatively analysed, and the preparation of the data for analysis is often very time consuming (Payne, 2007). Nevertheless, it should involve a breadth of participants from that population to increase the generalisability of the findings (Payne, 2007). This study involved practitioners from Scotland as the researcher was based in this country and financial constraints dictated this. However, participants were from 9 different regions and 14 different locations across Scotland (for a list see Table 3.1 in section 3.2.1). Therefore this sample was representative of a variety of experiences. In addition, unlike LaRooy et al. (2010) who used only police officers, it involved both police and social workers. Based on both of these factors it is clear the research involves a breadth of perspectives on rapport building, with the aim of finding commonality in experiences to improve the validity of the theory generated.

***Data collection***

The decision of whether to observe and analyse naturally occurring data (transcripts or video clips of real life forensic interviews), or directly interview practitioners was based on the premise that we wanted to uncover not only rapport approach but also the reasons behind the approach. Naturally occurring data would not offer any insight into the motivations behind rapport building approach, and how this may differ depending upon different circumstances (e.g. the child’s age, cognitive development, the setting etc.). We were looking for a rich understanding of the link between rapport and communication and consultation with those directly involved was the most appropriate way of achieving this. Focus groups with practitioners were the initial method selected, but due to the demands and time constraints of practitioner schedules it was extremely difficult to co-ordinate a variety of timetables. Consequently, with semi-structured interviews the researcher was able to travel to each interviewee based on their chosen time and location.

***Selection of qualitative method***

The researcher reviewed a variety of analytic approaches but grounded theory was the most appropriate as this method is used in the following circumstances: relatively little is known about the topic area, there are few theories to adequately explain the psychological underpinnings of the phenomenon, the researcher is interested in participant perspectives and experiences of the phenomenon, and the researcher aims to generate new theory (Payne, 2007). As mentioned previously, the rapport building phase is a relatively under researched component of the interview and although psychological explanations for its effectiveness have been hypothesized, they lack empirical validation (e.g. Roberts et al., 2004). This study aimed to generate a new theory for the link between rapport and communication in forensic interviews based on practitioner experience, and use this theory in subsequent experimental work evaluating the effects of different rapport protocols. It was therefore believed that grounded theory was the ideal approach for the analysis of the collected data.

***Limitations of grounded theory***

One of the major limitations of grounded theory is the detail and time required to analyse the data fully. The data has to be fragmented when coded and categorized, and researchers often lose sight of the overall aims of the research (Smith, 1997). Also, it is a method that demands systematic and rigorous analysis, but also requires imagination and insight on the part of the researcher. All of these factors can be very demanding, but the researcher must ensure that the full process of analysis and its components are carried out in their entirety.

The researcher in this study was new to qualitative data collection and analysis. The skills required for this research method take time to hone and develop (Richardson, 1997). To assist with this the researcher undertook a variety of courses in qualitative approaches and was also assessed on this component during a Masters course in research methods (see Appendix C for details of training undertaken). Expertise in conducting interviews was less of a concern as the researcher is trained on forensic interview practice, and has undertaken national courses and master classes with professionals in the interviewing field. Furthermore, various research techniques typically employed with qualitative data were used in the current research to increase the validity and reliability of the findings. These are covered in detail in section 3.2.5.

**3.1.4 The purpose of the present study**

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore Scottish practitioners’ views and experiences of rapport building practice during child forensic interviews. It focused specifically on the perceived communicative impact of rapport building and factors that may affect this. In addition, the interviewees were asked about the use of play during the interview. The theory generated and the comments about play were used to inform the implementation of the play rapport method in subsequent experimental chapters.

**3.2 Method**

**3.2.1 Participants**

Nineteen child protection practitioners from Scotland participated. Thirteen participants were police officers (7 females and 6 males) and 6 were social workers (6 females and 0 males). Participants were aged between 31 and 59, with a mean age of 39 years. Two different recruitment methods were used. For the first, the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland were contacted and given information about the study. Once this was approved an email was sent to child investigative interviewing trainers across Scotland. Each trainer then allocated a police officer or social worker in their team to participate (*n = 12)*. The second method of recruitment involved the researcher contacting practitioners that she had met during training in child investigative interviewing (*n* = 7). Potential participants were sent information sheets and consent forms about the study, which were retrieved by the researcher in the post or on the day of participation. Nine different regions across Scotland participated from 14 different locations (Central, Dumfries & Galloway, Fife, Grampian, Highlands, Scottish Borders, Strathclyde, and Tayside). In terms of years of service with police or social services the range was from 5 to 22 years, with a mean of 12 years. Experience of interviewing children ranged from 1 to 18 years, with a mean of 6.4 years (for information on the distribution of participant demographics please refer to Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1**

***Participant Characteristics***

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pseudonym** | **Profession** | **Years of service** | **Years of experience interviewing children** | **Recruitment method** | **Gender** |
| Debbie | Police | 12 | 3 | ACPOS | F |
| Grant | Police | 6 | 1 | Training | M |
| Mandy | Social Work | 12 | 10 | ACPOS | F |
| Gerry | Police | 8 | 2 | ACPOS | M |
| Mona | Police | 17 | 10 | Training | F |
| Lucy | Police | 10.5 | 9 | ACPOS | F |
| Gillian | Social Work | 22 | 18 | ACPOS | F |
| Kirsty | Police | 12 | 4 | ACPOS | F |
| Donna | Police | 8 | 3 | ACPOS | F |
| Sophie | Police | 7 | 5 | Training | F |
| Kerry | Social Work | 16 | 13 | Training | F |
| Tim | Police | 15 | 12 | ACPOS | M |
| Samantha | Social Work | 9 | 4 | ACPOS | F |
| Sandra | Social Work | 20 | 18 | Training | F |
| Donald | Police | 21 | 9 | ACPOS | M |
| Alison | Social Work | 20 | 9 | ACPOS | F |
| Geoffrey | Police | 22 | 12 | ACPOS | M |
| Ethan | Police | 20 | 12 | Training | M |
| Molly | Police | 5 | 2 | Training | F |

***Notes. ACPOS = Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland; M = male, F = female.***

**3.2.2 Data collection**

Ethical approval for the study was sought from the Department of Psychology at the University of Stirling and from the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland. No problems were encountered and support was given by both. Each interview took place in a quiet room in the participants’ work place (a police station, family protection unit or council building) with the exception of one interview that was carried out in the researcher’s home. The majority of the interviews were an hour in length with a range of 30 to 81 minutes; mean interview duration was 60.4 minutes. No monetary incentives were offered for participation in the research.

Interviews were carried out in a semi-structured format. This was decided because the researcher wanted to touch upon specific areas relating to rapport and communication, but also wanted to give the participants a degree of flexibility in providing their own answers spontaneously. Similar to a forensic interview, the researcher used the participant’s responses as a basis for further elaboration, and provided prompts to keep the communication on-going. The semi-structured format was maintained with an interview schedule which had a brief introductory outline about the study, a list of questions and some prompts (see Appendix D). To begin the interview the researcher always asked the same question, “Please describe for me a time when you felt you had good rapport with a young person you were interviewing?” Space was provided for the researcher on the schedule to take extensive notes, and this facilitated questioning of the interviewee and allowed the researcher to summarize the main points at the end of the interview. Minimal prompting was required for the participants and their general responsiveness was excellent. The content of the schedule was based around the following: the communicative impact of rapport and the rapport phase, the usefulness of the rapport phase, the strategies employed to establish rapport, the impact of individual differences on rapport approach, and finally the use of play to facilitate rapport and communication.

The interviews were audio recorded on an Olympus VN-310PC digital voice recorder then downloaded and saved onto the researcher’s computer, and then fully transcribed (for a sample of an interview transcript please refer to Appendix E). Once transcription was complete the interviews were imported into an NVIVO 8 computer software package. This computer software is often used by qualitative researchers to facilitate the process of analysis (Johnston, 2006). In previous years this was carried out by hand, but due to the amount of data and the detail of analysis required for qualitative research, this was an extremely time consuming process (Johnston, 2006). Computer assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) is now more commonly used and has several benefits over the previous method. These include the following: quicker organization and classification of data; more systematic analysis; ease of identification of insights and ideas; ability to interchange data with other applications such as excel, word and SPSS; and finally the data and outcomes of analysis are easily stored and located (Johnston, 2006). It also ensures that an audit trail can be provided which is part of the process of evaluating whether the data collected, and the resultant theory generated, is of a satisfactory quality (Johnston, 2006). The researcher however must ensure that the structure of the software package does not dictate the structure of the analysis (Di Gregorio, 2003). The researcher in the current study attended a course on the use of NVIVO, and through familiarisation with the tools available on the computer program, was able to distinguish which were most relevant for a grounded theory analysis.

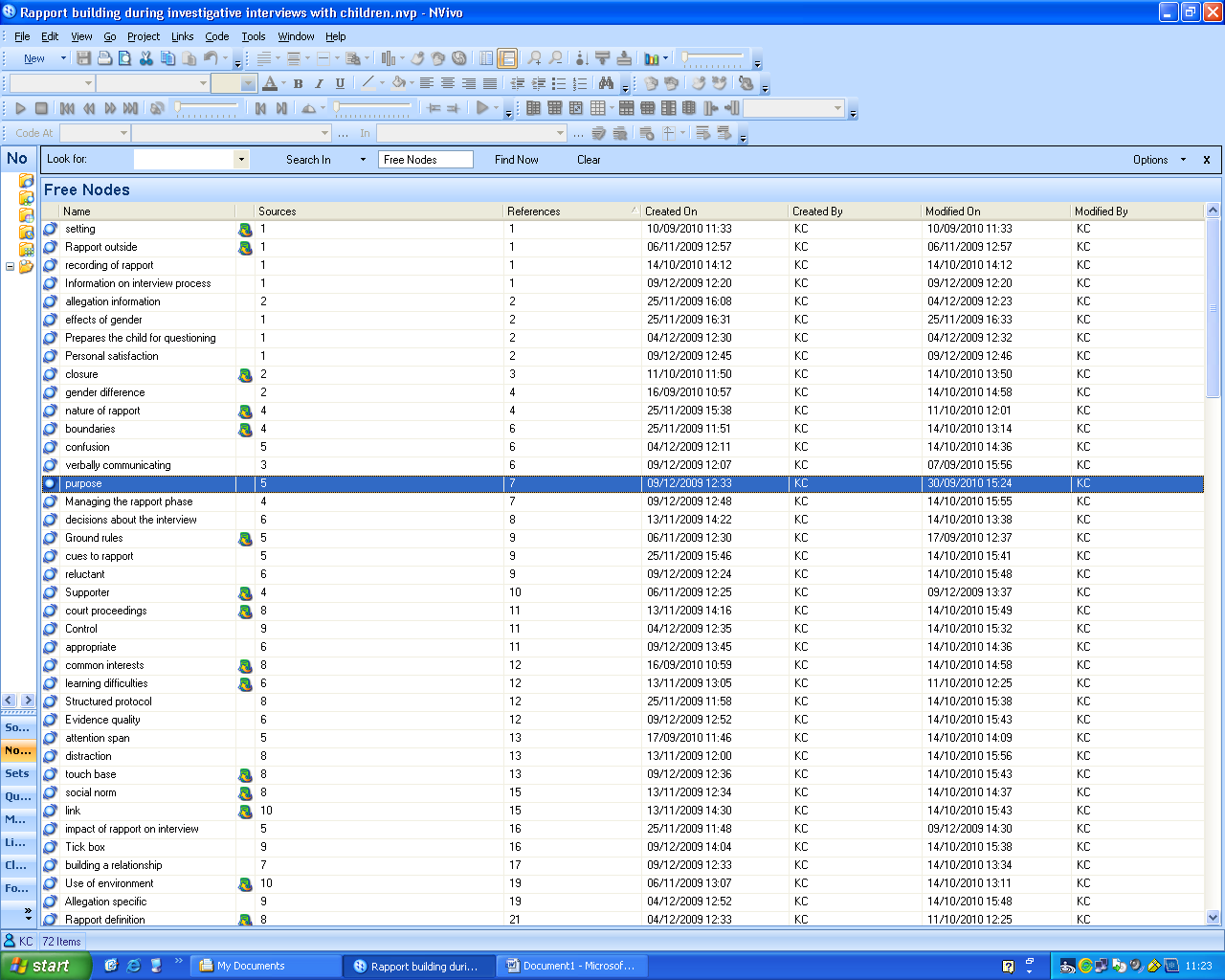
**3.2.3 Data analysis**

As mentioned previously, the aim of the study was to explore the relationship between rapport and communication in child forensic interviews, and to explore practitioners ‘opinions of the use of play during the rapport phase. The rationale for the use of grounded theory as the analytic approach was outlined in section 3.1.3. To reiterate, this method was chosen because little is known about the rapport phase and rapport building in the forensic interview, no ‘grand’ theories exist with respect to the impact of rapport building in this setting, the researcher was interested in participants’ views and experiences, and finally the researcher aimed to develop a theory that would adequately explain the link between rapport and communication during forensic interviews. Grounded theory is an inductive method in which the theory is closely derived from the data, as opposed to deductive which typically involves hypothesis testing (Pidgeon, 1997). Therefore grounded theory is a suitable method for the exploratory aims of this research project. The key stages of the analysis are outlined below accompanied by screen prints of each stage taken from the NVIVO program for the study. These prints show an audit trail which can be used to evaluate the rigour involved in the production of the theory from the initial data (Johnston, 2006).

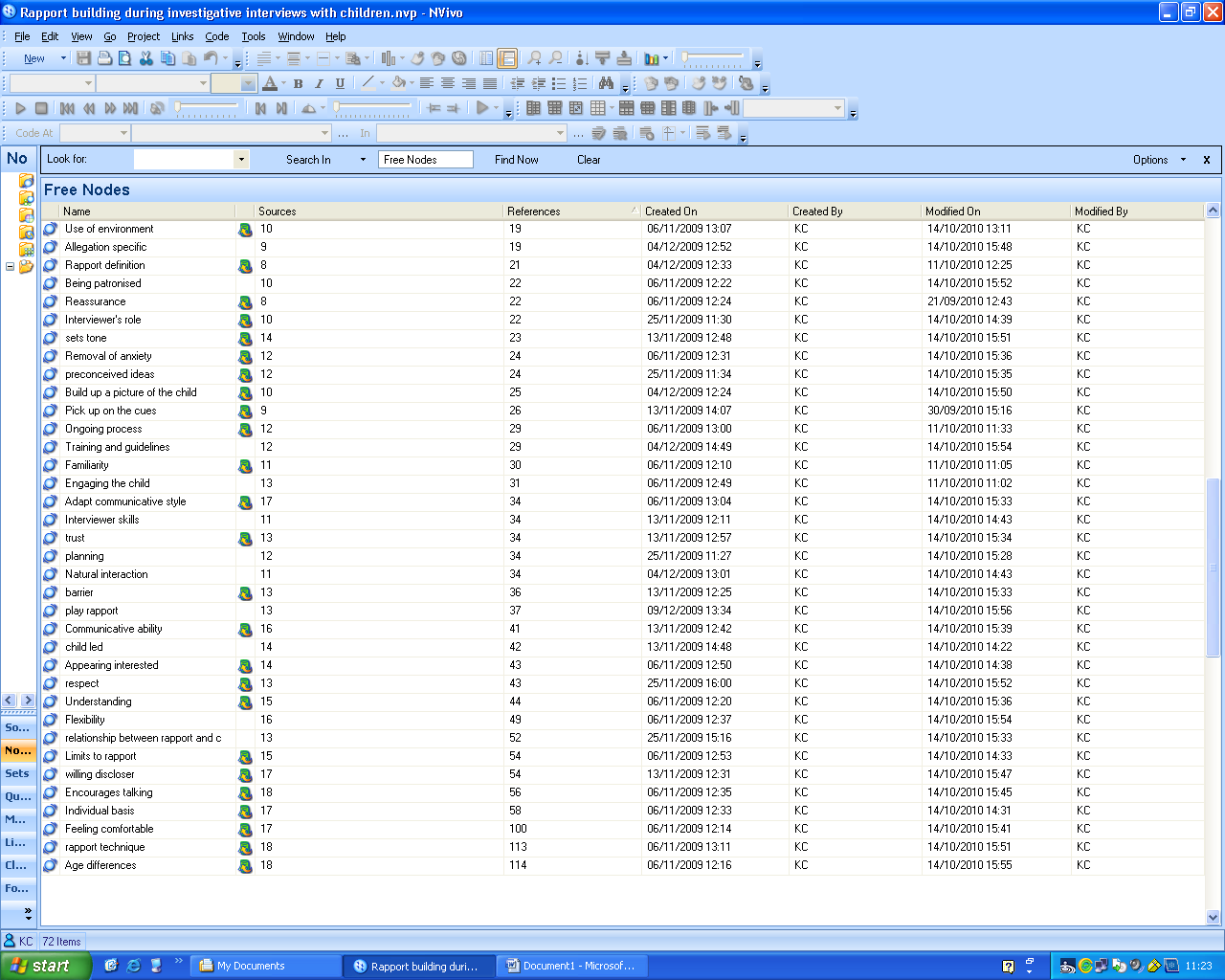
***Open coding***

Once transcription was complete the researcher re-read the interviews a number of times to familiarise them self with the content and nature of the interviews. This is a pre-requisite to effective analysis as it allows the researcher to become closer to the perspectives of the participants (Payne, 2007). Then initial coding of the interviews was carried out. The researcher very carefully read each line from the interviews and assigned the content to a category. The content were words, phrases or even paragraphs from the interviews, and are more commonly called ‘units’. Only those units which were related to the research question were identified and labelled. Some of the categories generated were based on the actual words used by the participants (*in vivo* categories) and others were based on the researcher’s description of the words. Open coding was carried out for the first 4 interviews and then further data was collected. Questions asked of the new participants were then also based on information provided by the previous participants. This is typical of a grounded theory approach as the questions are guided by the emerging theory, and further data collected contributes to the emerging model (Payne, 2007).For example, a difference in responsiveness to rapport building with respect to the age of the child was frequently mentioned in the earlier interviews. The researcher therefore touched upon this in subsequent interviews in order to explore this issue further. As it was mentioned regularly the researcher decided it was central to the relationship between rapport and communication, and it was important to deconstruct this idea in greater detail.

As more data was gathered further examples of the same and new categories were coded. This resulted in a large number of categories *n = 71* (see Figure 3.1a and b, and Appendix F for a full list of the original open coded categories). The coding at this stage was mainly descriptive as more abstract and conceptual coding should occur as the theory emerges later in the analytic process (Payne, 2007). Over the process of analysis ***saturation*** occurred in which no new categories were identified (Payne, 2007). This was an indication that the relevant and most important aspects of the data were recognized, and the researcher was ready to move on to the next stage of the analysis.



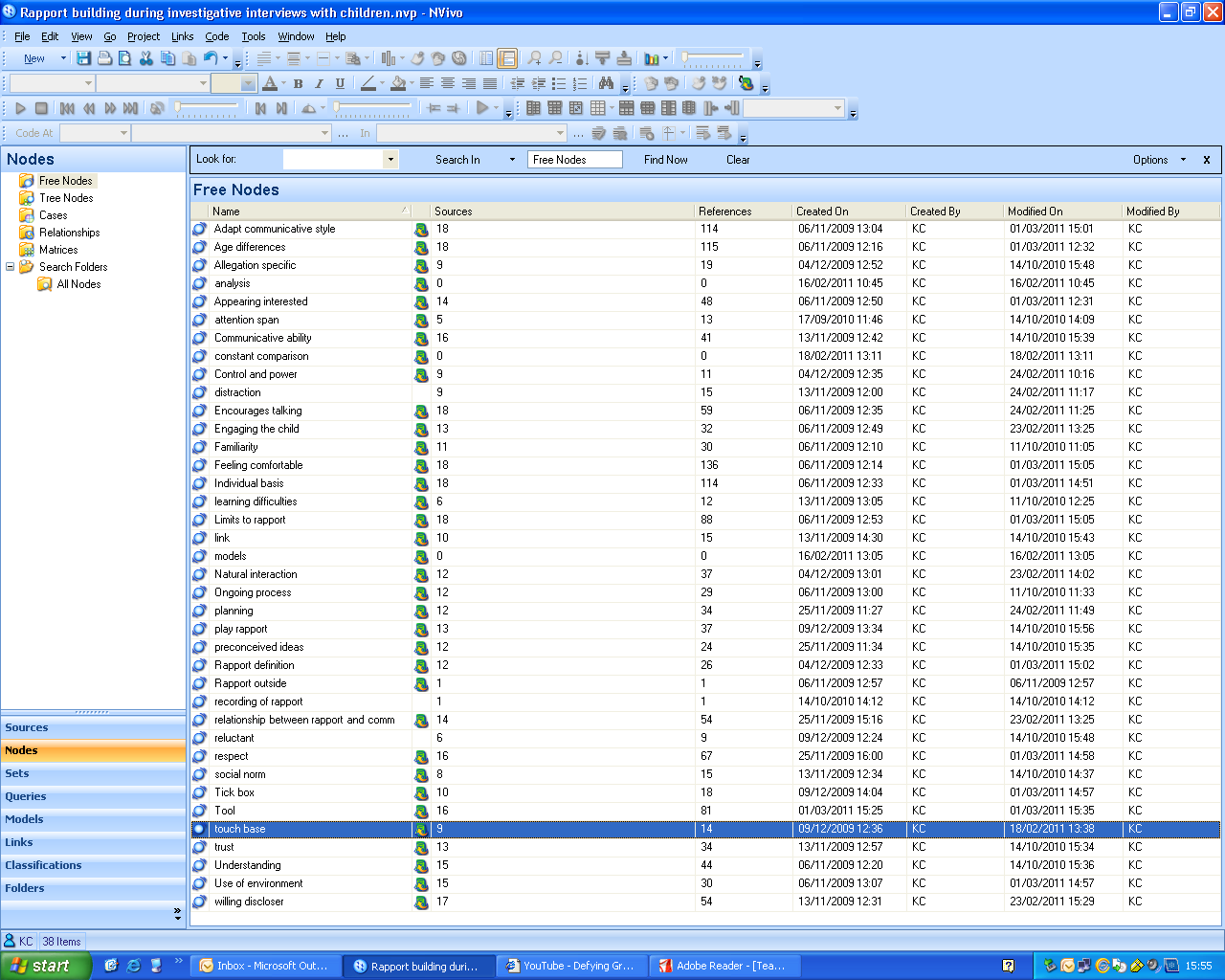
***Figure 3.1a.* Screen print of the initial open codes (*n* = 71).**



***Figure 3.1b.* Screen print of the initial open codes (*n* = 71)**

***Constant comparison technique***

The researcher then reviewed the categories that had been identified and compared segments of the categories against each other for similarities and differences. This allowed the researcher to further revise and refine the categories and ensure that the labels given for each were appropriate. Some of the categories were similar, for example ‘reassurance’ and ‘feeling comfortable’ and these were merged to create the new category ‘comfortable’ (please refer to Appendices G and H for a full list of the categories that were merged and deleted). Additionally, some of the categories were re-labelled to better define the content of information. The initial list of categories was therefore reduced from 71 to 14. The data reduction served to increase the focus of the analysis, and eradicate any of the categories generated which did not account for a large portion of the data.

****

***Figure 3.2.* Screen print of categories after reduction in the constant comparison stage of analysis.**

Once the categories were ***saturated*** concise and meaningful definitions of the properties and dimensions of each of the categories were written. An example of three of these category definitions at this stage of the analysis can be seen in Table 3.2 (please note the names of some of these categories changed later in the analysis).

**Table 3.2**

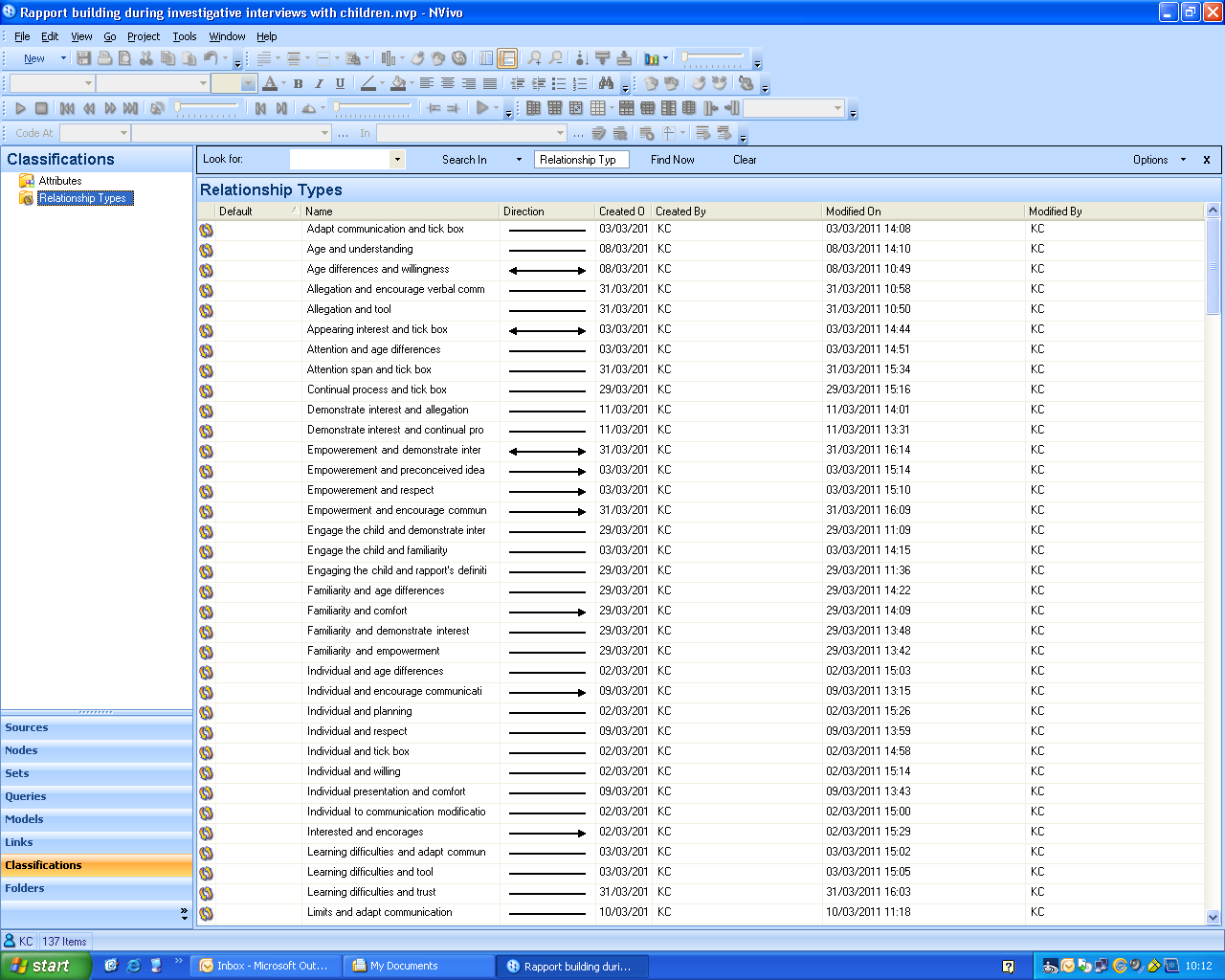
***Sample of Categories and their Definitions from the Constant Comparison Stage of Analysis***

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Definition** |
| Age differences | Differences in the approach and impact of rapport building on communication that are based on the age of the children. |
| Comfortable | The rapport phase makes the child feel at ease, or more at ease, which reduces their anxiety and facilitates communication. |
| Individual basis | The interviewer’s approach to rapport is based on the child’s individual presentation. The child’s presentation also gives the interviewer valuable information about how to conduct the remainder of the interview in terms of communication. |

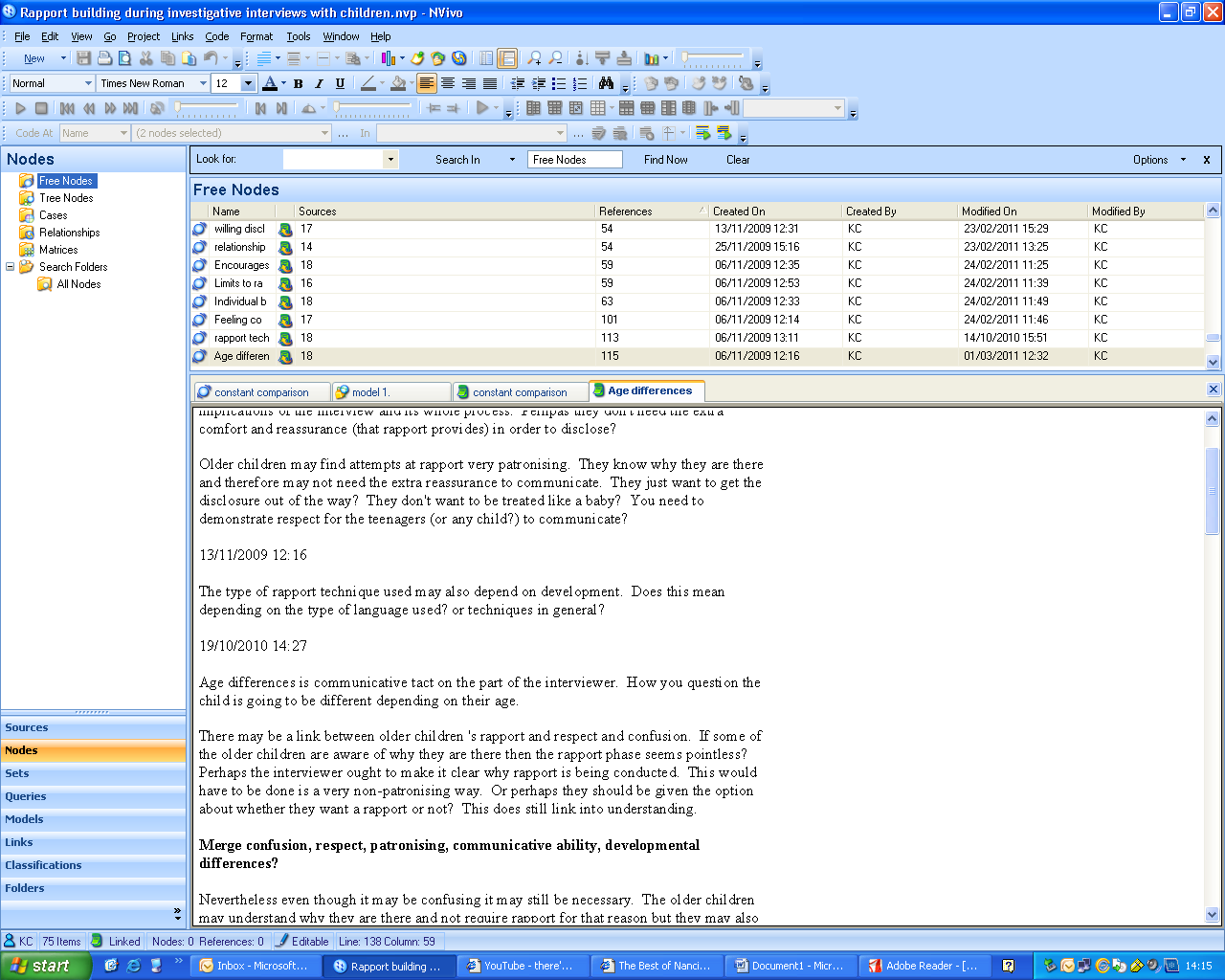
***Axial coding***

The categories generated up until this point were then further refined and reduced. This was achieved by analysing the excerpts from each category in detail and discovering redundancies, links and relationships between categories. As this point a ‘coding paradigm’ was adopted that centred on viewing the data from the perspective of the research aim, i.e. ‘facilitation of communication’. Coding paradigms are used to ensure that the researcher maintains focus relating to the research question, and begins to view the data in a more abstract and conceptual way (Payne, 2007). Consequently, rather than constantly describing the categories and relationships, the researcher begins to conceptualise the aspects of the data by looking at the underlying meaning and ‘subtext’ of what the data is communicating (Payne, 2007). For example, the participants often spoke about the fact that rapport was something that was carried out in everyday communication, and that they didn’t agree with the way the rapport phase was taught and defined as a mechanical phase that occurs before the substantive phase. This was reinterpreted by the researcher and redefined as the category ‘natural interaction’. The underlying meaning was that rapport is a natural part of communicative discourse and is central to opening the channels of communication between the interviewer and the child. It shouldn’t *just* be viewed as a component of the interview that is used to assess the child’s level of communication, but is in fact something that normally occurs when first initiating conversation with another person, regardless of the aims of the interaction (more information about this category is explained in section 3.3.8).

The discovery of relationships between the different categories added coherence to the emerging theory, and allowed the researcher to build on the multi-faceted aspects of the link between rapport and communication (e.g. ‘developmental stage’ and ‘understanding’ as older children understood the interview process better than the younger children). The relationships between the categories in this model were numerous, and this demonstrates the detail and the explanatory power of the theory that was being generated (figure 3.3 displays a screen print of some of the relationships created in the NVIVO project). At this point the researcher also followed the recommendation of incorporating hypothesis testing into the emerging theory (Payne, 2007). This involved proposing statements that account for the findings and examining whether these can be supported from the data, e.g. age differences in responsiveness to the rapport phase is affected by the child’s level of understanding about the interview’s purpose. Younger children need the rapport phase to increase understanding whereas older children, especially teenagers, have a greater understanding about the interview, and the rapport phase is therefore less important.

***Figure 3.3.* Screen print of a sample of the relationships created in NVIVO during the axial coding stage of analysis.**

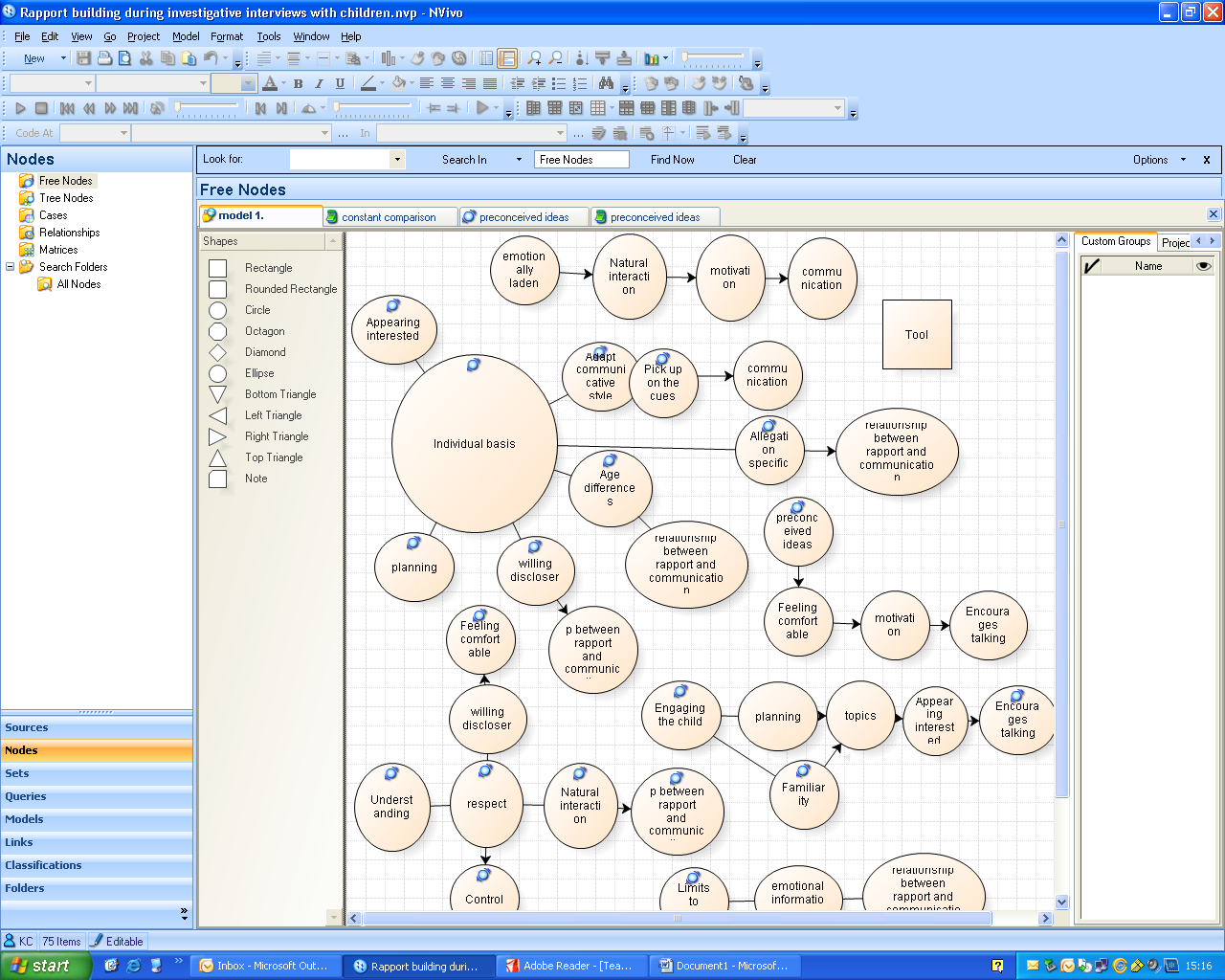
Throughout every stage of the analysis the researcher wrote memos about the analytic process. This is standard procedure in qualitative analysis and is the way in which the ideas and insights of the researcher can be captured (Payne, 2007). Once again these provide an audit trail in order to evaluate the development of the emerging theory (Payne, 2007). In the current study the researcher used these memos to describe the data, then to describe the process and insights involved when reducing and redefining categories, and finally to explain the thoughts behind the conceptualisation of the data into the final theory. For an example of a memo from the constant comparison stage of analysis please refer to Figure 3.4.

****

***Figure 3.4.* Screen print of a memo from the constant comparison stage of analysis.**

***Theoretical integration***

This was the final major stage of the analysis in which each of the categories were scrutinised and a core category was identified. This core category must have the major explanatory power for the theory (Payne, 2007) and in this study the core category was called ‘tool’. This was decided with the view that the link between the rapport phase and communication was that the interviewers perceived it as a tool for facilitating communication (see the results section for more detail). The core category should be able to explain the majority of the other categories, and the remaining categories are organized and integrated into a conceptually meaningful structure that centres on the core category. NVIVO was useful here as it allowed the researcher to create visual images of the categories, and manipulate these in various ways to help understand how the categories fit together to create the overall theory. An example of one of the first models created can be seen in Figure 3.5.

****

***Figure 3.5.* A screen print of an early model generated in the final stages of analysis.**

During this stage the researcher returned to the literature to investigate whether links existed between the categories and the previous research, and to also further develop the emerging theory. For example ‘comfortable’ was very closely linked to the previous literature indicating the benefits of reducing children’s anxiety through social support (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007). This approach is described as **theoretical sensitivity** and allowed the researcher to further validate the theory with reference to previous experimental data. In addition, at this stage the researcher was continuously conceptualising the emerging model by writing memos on how the categories came together to explain the overall theory (please refer to Figure 3.6 for a figure of the final theory/model).

**Assessment (developmental stage, willingness to communicate & child’s background)**

**Adjustment**

**(rapport redundancy, understanding, demonstrate interest, engagement & natural interaction)**

**Tool**

**Psychological Outcome**

**(comfortable, respect and trust)**

**Overall aim**

**Facilitation of communication**

***Figure 3.6.* Final model of ‘the relationship between the rapport phase and children’s communication in investigative interviews’.**

Finally, having developed the new theory, the transcripts were returned to, to validate the theory against parts of the text. Excerpts of what the interviewers said were selected as concrete examples of the new theory. Illustrations of deviant cases were also uncovered to test the limits of the theory. Nevertheless, this was seldom the case and numerous quotes were selected that could support the theory of the rapport building phase as a tool that facilitates children’s communication (see section 3.3.4).

**3.2.4 Reflexivity**

As qualitative analysis is a subjective process it is essential to consider the influence of the researcher on the procedure of analysis and the emerging theory. In terms of the interviews, some of the participants (*n =* 7) knew the researcher from a previous training course. From an evaluative perspective this would serve to facilitate the communication during the interviews. However, at no point did the researcher experience any reticence on the part of any of the participants. All participants had volunteered to take part and arguably would not have taken the time to be involved if they were not willing to communicate. Additionally, being interviewers themselves they could appreciate the difficulties involved, and were fully co-operative and open when providing their information. At no point did the researcher feel as though the interviews with known participants were of a better quality than those with whom they had no previous experience.

Further to this point, the majority of the participants spontaneously admitted enjoying the interview, and felt it was beneficial to communicate their experiences as it allowed them to conceptualise the rapport phase from a new perspective. Many of them mentioned they had gained new insights into their rapport practice, based on their own reflections that they hadn’t had the time or the opportunity to consider before. This links in with the previous comments regarding the overwhelming focus on the substantive phase of the interview in the empirical literature and during training (Hershkowitz, 2009).

In terms of analysis, the researcher did have the perspective that rapport building would be a communicative facilitator during child forensic interviews, prior to data collection. It could be argued that because of this she was selective in their analysis of the data. Nevertheless, the overwhelming amount of information provided from participants that supports the researcher’s hypothesis could refute this claim. In addition, any points raised by participants that presented an opposite perspective were considered during conceptualisation of the theory and can be viewed in section 3.3.4. Finally, an independent researcher who also investigates forensic interviewing practice analysed seven of the transcripts, and a general consensus was found with regards to the categories discovered. Further details of this can be found in Appendix I.

**3.2.5 Critical evaluation of qualitative research**

The validity and reliability of qualitative data and theory (or trustworthiness as it is referred to in qualitative research) is assessed across 4 main categories: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). The methods employed in data collection and analysis must cover all four aspects to validate the quality of the resultant theory. An explanation of each of these and how the current study covered these components is outlined below:

***Credibility***

This relates to whether or not the data and findings are believable. One way to achieve this is for the researcher to reflect upon the research process and their involvement. This is frequently carried out by the process of reflexivity and section 3.2.4 covers this in the present study. A technique called triangulation can also be employed (Hammersley, 1997). This involves corroborating the data and findings from a variety of different sources. In the current study an independent researcher was employed to analyse a random sample of the initial interview transcripts. The themes that emerged matched those of the original researcher (these can be found in Appendix I). Negative case analysis was another method used to assess credibility. This involves looking for examples that contradict the emerging theme and model, thus creating a balanced perspective in the overall theory. This was carried out in the theoretical integration component of the analysis. The idea that rapport building is not effective at facilitating communication is covered extensively in the ‘rapport redundancy’ theme in section 3.3.4.

***Transferability***

Transferability is whether or not the theory can be generalised to the rest of the sample’s population (Payne, 2007). A large number of practitioners from several different regions, police forces and social work services participated. In addition, the sample involved a mix of males and females with a variety of years’ experience in interviewing children. As such, the sample selected has enough breadth and depth to be considered representative of practitioners. Secondly, transferability can be assessed by examining the detail of description and explanation given for the data collection and analysis. Once again it could be said that the information covered in this chapter more than meets these criteria.

***Dependability***

This is related to reliability in quantitative research and investigates whether the findings could be considered consistent across a variety of different situations (Payne, 2007). The audit trail produced in this study gives detailed descriptions of the analysis process with screen prints and category tables provided in sections 3.2.3 and Appendices F- H. This would enable future researchers to carry out a similar process of analysis to test the dependability of the data and findings. Finally, the process of triangulation also contributed to the dependability of the theory (see Appendix I).

***Confirmability***

The final assessment of trustworthiness involves asking whether the data and theory are free from researcher bias (King, 1997). Qualitative research is a subjective process (King, 1997), therefore it is important that the researcher accounts for the influence of their own perspective on the theory generated. This can also be overcome with many of the techniques already outlined, e.g. reflexivity, the transparency of the audit trail and analyst triangulation (Hammersley, 1997).

**3.3 Results**

Once all of the aspects of analysis were complete it became clear that the core category that was generated to explain the link between rapport and communication was ‘tool’. The rapport building phase in the interview was used by the interviewers as a tool to facilitate communication. This was achieved in 3 main ways: (1) as a tool to assess the child based on their individual presentation, (2) as a tool in which the interviewer adjusts their approach based on the individual presentation, and (3) this adjustment then leads on to the rapport building as a tool that produces a psychological outcome in the interaction, that finally **facilitates the communication between the interviewer and child** (the theory is shown in Figure 3.6).

Each of the three main stages incorporated a number of sub-categories that explain how the three phases are achieved (refer to Figure 3.6). In this section each of the stages of the theory will be explained with a specific description of how the sub-categories are operationalized in the stage. Quotes from the interviews with the practitioners are used to support the descriptions. All of these factors are related back to the overall core category of ‘tool’, as each and every single category identified was described by the interviewers within this paradigm.

**3.3.1 The rapport phase as a tool to *assess* the child’s individual presentation during the interview. Theme 1a - developmental stage**

As mentioned above, the interviewers often used the rapport building phase as an opportunity to assess the child. This was in terms of their physical, cognitive, behavioural, emotional and communicative presentation. With specific reference to communication, the interviewer could assess the child’s ability in this area and use this information as a guide for how to carry out the communication throughout the remainder of the interview. In the following example, a social worker Samantha is explaining how the rapport phase gives her an indication of each child’s communicative ability:

*“It (rapport) gets you, particularly with younger children again, as well it gives you a flavour of their communication skills and their style I mean, because sometimes a very young child, a two year old the questions you need to ask them would be very different from you know even from the questions to a four-year-old, it's a very different technique. It's not very often that we would interview a two year old right enough but I've seen us interviewing three year olds and anything from a three year old to a five year old you'll be very different because their communication skills are different, but you find sometimes that a three year old’s communication style is really quite good and they are able to engage in a comfortable conversation, questions and answers whereas you may have to use different techniques with someone who is two or three and the communication isn't that well developed.”*

Samantha is stating that there is a great range in communication ability with children, even within age groups. The rapport phase gives her the ideal opportunity to assess the child’s communicative production and comprehension, and she then tailors her subsequent interview approach based on this.

Another way in which the developmental stage was referred to by the participants was with respect to the age differences involved in responses to the rapport phase. This was one of the most commonly mentioned themes during the interviews as the participants felt the effectiveness of the rapport phase was often grounded in the child’s age. With young children, under 5 years of age in particular, they often presented with a limited attention span. One interviewer found the rapport phase could provide an indication about how attentive the child would be and this then gave the interviewer room to adjust to the child’s concentration ability:

*“If you don’t hold their concentration then that can be an indication that you need to move on, it might be that it’s not working or you might have just gone on too long. But that can be quite important they start looking back at the TV, well we usually ask for the television to be turned off but their attention seems to be going because if you lose their attention then the interviews not going to be very good either.”*

The interviewer is stating that sometimes with a younger child a prolonged rapport style is not suitable. By looking back at the television and not focusing on the interview the child’s behaviour is telling the interviewer that they are struggling with concentrating on the communication. The interviewer uses this information as an indication that they need to move quickly on to the next stage of the interview, and that the child does not respond well to lengthy discussions.

Another way in which the age differences are evident is with adolescent interviewees. Often older children and teenagers have a greater understanding about the interview’s purpose and are ready and willing to communicate about the incident. They find the rapport phase confusing and convey to the interviewer that they do not want to carry on with rapport building, but instead want to talk about the reasons why they are being interviewed:

*“if you’ve got an older child, and this has happened to me a couple of times with a teenager, ehm where we are, they are being quite closed and y’know you’ve sort of explained your role and what you are there for and “do you understand” and “yes” and blah blah blah and then you kind of y’know “are you happy to talk to me?” “yes I’m happy to talk to you” and you kind of maybe go into a little bit of “oh were you at school today?” and the sort of rapport building up and they say “but you are here to talk to me about..” and y’know you say “that’s right, are you happy for me to do that?” “Yes I am” so you can have one sentence of your rapport building. So there’s a lot of times where they don’t want “I don’t want to talk about bloody football, I want to talk about what happened to me.”*

Here the social worker Mandy gauged that the young person was ready to talk but still attempted to build rapport, perhaps because they are told during training and in the guidelines to always attempt this. The young person’s clear response however, allowed the interviewer to see that they were ready to speak about the incident and wouldn’t respond well to avoiding the main purpose of the interview. As we shall see in section 3.3.10 under the category of respect, failing to adhere to the adolescent’s wishes to avoid rapport building could act as a communication inhibiter.

The differences across the age groups were often explained by the interviewers with respect to the young person’s understanding of the interview’s purpose. It was generally felt that younger children may need to be familiarised with the interview process and structure to feel comfortable enough to communicate:

*“It is getting about them feeling comfortable, the younger child feeling comfortable, whereas the older child will tend to have a lot of awareness of why they are being interviewed and whether they are going to disclose or not, I think it depends very much on the age of the child sometimes and, obviously the circumstances and whether they know why why you’ve come to see them, and I think the best opportunities for rapport are when I think it is all so relevant if it is the younger child whether it's nursery age or primary school age that they are in an environment where they feel comfortable.”*

The reassurance offered by the rapport phase makes the younger child feel more comfortable about the interaction. Older children may not need this reassurance because their overall maturity leads to awareness about these interviews, and perhaps more of an appreciation of the link between the events in their lives and the request for communication by child protection officers. Once again, the rapport phase provides an opportunity for the interviewer to assess whether or not the child has an understanding about the interview’s function, and based on this information, how best to either increase understanding and therefore reassurance, or move on to the main substantive phase of the interview.

**3.3.2 The rapport phase as a tool to *assess* the child’s individual presentation during the interview. Theme 1b – willingness to communicate**

The majority of the interviewers mentioned that the child’s willingness to communicate was also apparent in the rapport phase, and would impact upon whether or not the rapport phase was continued. The behaviour exhibited by the children here would give a great indication of how motivated they were to communicate about the alleged incident:

*“Well one wee boy at a primary school who had been the victim of physical abuse, where as soon as I said who I was he said “well you’re here to speak about my dad hitting me” and it was like boom! He just couldn’t get it off his chest quick enough. So we didn’t even have time to consider rapport building.”*

Here Tim, a police officer, is stating that the child immediately wanted to communicate and the rapport phase was abandoned. This type of interaction was mentioned frequently by the interviewers, and in cases like these they strayed from the standard protocol of initiating rapport, and decided to commence with the rest of the interview. They responded to the overt message given by the child that they did not want a rapport phase, but instead wanted to communicate about the incident. Interviewers spoke about the negative responses they would get from the children if they attempted rapport with someone who was ready to communicate, with some children explicitly stating that they did not want to conduct rapport but would prefer to move on to the substantive issues:

*“You sometimes get kids in who don’t want to know you, and aren’t interested in you or being your friend or or y’know, they just want to say what they want to say and get out and y’know you can be as nice and and whatever else as you as you want to be and try and build rapport, but you’ll just come up against a brick wall regardless of how much time you spend or what you do, so there are those occasions where rapport, although you’re trying, doesn’t play a part in it as such because the kid just doesn’t want to know, and they just want to say look this happened to me, can I can I just tell you about it so I can go.”*

As the overall aim of the forensic interview is to elicit evidence from children then it makes sense for the interviewers to abandon rapport in these circumstances and carry on with the remainder of the interview. Some interviewers however, then stated that this did not mean that the rapport phase is not beneficial in other aspects of the interview, and found it useful to return to a rapport approach if the child was then struggling to communicate or became distressed:

*“And you can go in and out of the rapport phase and if a child becomes distressed, you can take a break and have a general chat just to put them at ease, and actually then go back into the rapport phase and then back into the interview. So again it’s about being flexible and looking at the needs of a child.”*

Once again here the rapport is used as a communication aid. The interviewer returned to neutral topics to move away from speaking about the incident, and hopefully to calm the child down. So although they initially left out the rapport phase due to the child’s presentation as willing, they still felt that it had an important function later on in the interview.

The topic of willingness was also often mentioned in conjunction with developmental stage. The interviewer’s frequently found that the young people who presented as willing communicators tended to be older children or teenagers:

*“But you’re going to have young adolescents who are going to be the victims of a sexual assault or something, they know exactly why you are there and a lot of these people it might not be a family member, it might be a they’ve been attacked in the park by a stranger so it’s very much like a witness interview then, they know “I’m coming to you to report a crime” but because they’re a child and they’ve been the victim of that sort of crime you’re carrying out a joint investigative interview, but they know exactly why they are there because they have come forward to say “in the park last night I was attacked by a man” so you don’t need the need for a long rapport building kind of negates itself there.”*

In this excerpt, although Tim mentions the word ‘child’ he is referring to older children who, despite being children in the eyes of the law, are willing providers of information who may not require the reassurance provided by rapport building. They are assessed as willing, and this impacts upon whether the interviewer decides to carry on with the rapport phase or move straight on to the interview. Nevertheless, it is important to note that although these instances of willing communicators were mentioned by most of the interviewees, they also tended to state that this was in the minority of cases. More often than not the children still required the rapport phase for communication.

This assessment of the relationship between rapport and willingness seemed to occur on a continuum with interviewers, as they felt that it was clear from the rapport phase if the child was **less** willing to communicate and this too would impact upon their decision with regards to rapport protocol:

*“Initially she was quite shy and worried about speaking to me y’know; she doesn’t know me from Adam because she’d never seen me before so just to take a bit of time at the start until she relaxed.”*

Here Molly, a police officer, has assessed the child as reluctant and realises she has to carry on with the rapport phase to reduce this effect. The child’s behaviour during rapport indicated to the interviewer how willing she would be, and the interviewer was able to adjust her approach in order to respond to the needs of the child.

**3.3.3 The rapport phase as a tool to *assess* the child’s individual presentation during the interview. Theme 1c – the child’s background**

This sub-category was mentioned less frequently in comparison to developmental stage and willingness, but nevertheless was still touched upon by the interviewers with respect to using the rapport as a chance to assess the child. As mentioned previously, the rapport phase often involves coverage of neutral topics with the child. More often than not this reverts to home and family life where the child is asked to describe who is in their family or what their home looks like. In these instances the interviewers stated they had the chance to build up a picture of the child’s life, and this information provided some investigative groundwork that could be used in the remainder of the interview. In Mandy’s case, when investigating allegations about intra-familial abuse, she would purposefully ask the child about their family or ask the child to describe the layout of their house:

*“So you’ll, here’s one, a father assaulted their child and ehm this was over an argument about a computer game and I’d maybe spoken to the child about “so you’ve got a PS2 does your dad play computer games with you?” and “yes dad plays computer games” and so “what kind of games do you play?” so it evolves from that.”*

Mandy could then assess the child’s responses to the family members to give some insight into how the child felt with regards to the family. Or information about the family or the child’s home would help the interviewer build a picture of the child’s life. Sometimes these topics would be asked about in the recall or questioning phase, but the rapport phase provided the opportunity for the interviewer to do some assessment and groundwork, and leave more room for discussion of the allegation in the substantive phase.

In summary, the rapport phase acted as a tool for the interviewers as it permitted them to assess the child based on their individual presentation. The child’s developmental stage, how they respond to rapport, how willing they are to communicate, and their background information are all extremely important aspects of the interview. They provide the foundation for how the interviewer will approach the remainder of the rapport phase and the interview in general. As demonstrated in the next section, the interviewer’s decision making stems from these factors and enables them to adjust to the child’s presentation for the purposes of facilitating communication.

**3.3.4 The rapport phase as a tool in which the interviewer *adjusts* their approach based on the individual presentation. Theme 2a – rapport phase redundancy**

Once assessment of the child has been achieved there are various ways in which the interviewer can use the rapport phase to adjust to the child’s presentation with the overall aim of facilitating communication. Sometimes with respect to rapport’s effectiveness, the interviewers mentioned that their assessment lead them to the conclusion that the rapport was going to be ineffective and should be abandoned overall. In the following example Kirsty talks about trying to use rapport to engage the child, but the child is not responding:

*“If I said trying to get blood out of stone, sometimes it can be very much like that and it does make it very difficult because if you are speaking to a child who for whatever reason doesn’t want to try and engage with you or talk to you, it can be very difficult even when you are trying your very best to try and find a wee bit about what their likes and dislikes are, if they don’t want to talk I don’t think it matters what you ask them.”*

Through attempting to discuss neutral topics the interviewer becomes aware that the child is not only unwilling to communicate during rapport but is non-responsive overall. Kirsty mentions this makes the interview and communication very difficult for her, and that she believes that no matter how hard she tries, if the child does not want to speak then there is no benefit in forcing the issue. As lead interviewer she can then make the decision to stop the interview and perhaps attempt to conduct it another time.

In support of theme 1b, the interviewers also mentioned that assessment of the child as a willing communicator would enable them to abandon rapport and commence with the remainder of the interview. In the next example the interviewer is saying that some children clearly don’t want to continue with the rapport phase and this then causes the interviewer to move on to the substantive phase:

*“I can think of one quite recently where the boy was the subject of, he was the victim of an assault involving a family member and I was interviewing him in the hospital, and he was very angry and if I had spent very long trying to get to know him and I mean I knew about him and what I talked about at the start was the fact that I knew what had happened and stuff, so it wasn’t really a rapport as such and he was very angry and he wanted to, he knew, he was going to have to tell me what had happened and that’s why I was there so it was late and he had been through a lot at that point in the day and we had to joint interview him at that point because we had somebody detained for it, and because of time pressure and everything we had to do it and he wanted to say it so sometimes there would be times where that’s just not going to be appropriate.”*

Moira is referring to the possible negative implications of carrying on with the rapport phase here, and often the participants said in cases like these the response to rapport allowed them to see that the child just wanted to communicate about the incident. The interviewers then would adjust to this by moving straight on to the substantive issues. The child’s response during rapport and the introductory phase permitted the interviewer to see that a more direct approach was needed.

**3.3.5 Rapport building as a tool in which the interviewer *adjusts* their approach based on the individual presentation. Theme 2b - understanding**

Another approach mentioned was to increase the child’s understanding in the interview. This can first of all relate to whether they have an appreciation of the interview’s purpose. In the following example the social worker Kerry talks about the level of some children’s understanding and how the rapport phase interacts with this:

*“Well usually the child’s been told that two people are going to come and speak to them or interview them and they haven’t got any idea what interview means, so when you go in your on one side of the river and the child is on the other and the child is looking at you as if to say what the hell are you two, why are you here? But the rapport building allows you to explain to the child and to get again the commonality ehm to build that bridge hopefully for them to walk across to you.”*

Kerry uses the simple analogy of crossing a bridge to represent how the rapport phase increases the child’s understanding. The interviewers often mentioned that the children were anxious about the interview, and by explaining the interview’s purpose during the rapport phase this increased understanding and facilitated the process:

*“Some children clearly aren’t (intelligent) and you might need rapport to sort of establish parameters to enable the child to understand exactly, to understand the process, for some children you know.”*

Another way in which increased understanding was beneficial in rapport was with regards to pre-conceived ideas. Gerry spoke about the overall negative perception of the police and how the rapport phase permitted him to help children see that these perceptions were wrong:

*“He or she knows nothing of any the two of them, the police the police are bad people doesnae matter what you tell you you tell the kids, okay, they look at the police as being bad people, so the rapport certainly as far as I’m concerned and actually I’ve never actually asked a social worker that question, but for me it’s to try and, put myself over. Ehm, Y’know, not necessarily as a nice guy but, y’know a human a human being if you like.”*

Children’s lack of understanding about the police officer’s role in this situation may have a negative impact upon the communication, and so Gerry used the rapport phase to humanise himself from the child’s perspective. This would help the child see that the interviewer was not there for a negative purpose, but intended to help the child. Increasing understanding would reduce children’s anxiety, and reassure them about the interview process (more information about reassurance is covered in section 3.3.9).

Developmental stage once again played an important part in the interpretation of this sub-category. Interviewers generally felt that increased understanding was more important for the younger children they interviewed:

*“And that is usually when you are dealing with much younger children who perhaps don’t really know why you are there or don’t really understand what you’re asking them.”*

Here the interviewer is explaining that rapport has a greater function for younger children who have less of an understanding of the interview’s purpose and implications. This then changes when dealing with older children and teenagers who are fully aware of these issues:

*“It would be daft just to go straight; it depends on the age of the child. I mean with really small children that’s a difficult one but with children who are in their early teens then some of these kids are very switched on, they are under no illusion why they’re there.”*

Here Ethan was explaining the difference in rapport’s function across two different age groups and was highlighting that teenagers fully understand the interview’s purpose which renders the rapport phase less necessary. Once again this links to the interviewer’s response and more often than not a structured rapport would not be attempted based on the older child’s presentation.

An additional way in which rapport was conceptualised as increasing understanding was by conveying to the child what was expected of the interview. In the following example the interviewer makes reference to setting the interview tone with rapport:

*“I definitely think it sets the tone and I probably think it sets the scene for the child as well, because it lets them get used to you and it lets them get used to being asked questions, being listened to, being given the opportunity to respond.”*

The child may not only have a limited understanding about the interview’s purpose, but they may be unsure as to what is expected of them. Here the interviewer is saying that the rapport phase familiarises the child with the questions they will be asked and the general format of a forensic interview. The communicative style expected in the interview is different to typical adult-child interactions, and the rapport phase gives the interviewer the chance to introduce this style prior to communication about the substantive issues.

Overall, the rapport building phase was considered by the participants as essential in increasing the children’s understanding about the interview purpose and process. According to the interviewers this has many psychological benefits for the children (see stage 3 below), and helped the participants overcome some of the communication barriers evident at the beginning of the interviews.

**3.3.6 The rapport phase as a tool in which the interviewer *adjusts* their approach based on the individual presentation. Theme 2c – demonstrate interest**

Another way in which the rapport phase acts as a tool for the interviewer is by allowing them to demonstrate their listening skills to the child. This was often explained as not only showing they were listening, but that it was important that the child knew the interviewer cared about what was being said. In the following example the police officer mentions that some of the young people often have anxiety about the type of information they are expected to convey. They need reassurance that the interviewer is truly interested:

*“It makes it look as though you are actually interested in them rather than just what they are there to tell you y’know ehm and you’re obviously conscious of the fact the kid’s thinking, “he doesnae want to talk about this”, with older kids you do watch it because they will, they will think “oh hold on, this is a guy here he doesnae want to talk to me about eh, me being sexually assaulted” but I make it clear to them.”*

Here the officer was stating that due to the nature of the allegation the child may be less communicative because they believe the officer wouldn’t want to hear about this type of information. He therefore makes it clear during the rapport phase that he has a genuine interest in what is going on it the child’s life, irrespective of whether it’s about the allegation or other things. Consequently, the listening skills have the additional component of conveying that the interviewer is actually interested in the young person.

**3.3.7 The rapport phase as a tool in which the interviewer *adjusts* their approach based on the individual presentation. Theme 2d –engagement**

Gillian saw the rapport phase as an opportunity to grasp the child’s attention and found that if they could manage to achieve this then more often than not that facilitated the interaction:

*“And the fact that you’ve now got this two way thing going, no matter how difficult or sensitive it is if the child is engaging with you and attempting to answer your questions and so on. It is a fair indicator that you’ve got rapport going.”*

The key for her was that the child was responsive during the rapport phase, and regardless of the circumstances the child would still be motivated to interact during the interview. The participants often stated that the crucial component for gaining the child’s attention during the interaction was finding out about their particular interests. Gillian would often try and obtain information about the interests of specific age groups and try and focus the rapport topic on these:

*“So you could be blabbering on about something and the child just loses complete interest but if you get that connection, y’know Sponge Bob square pants or something else, it can get them thinking “oh”, y’know it’s just that wee you just that wee in sometimes, so you’re really, getting your kinda information on what a a specific age group is into, it’s quite I find quite helpful.”*

She refers to this as ‘you just get that wee in sometimes’ where she has managed to uncover a topic that the child is very interested in and this successfully opens up the channels of communication. Initially, they were not responsive during rapport but by touching on something that has particular appeal for the child, this changed the child’s behaviour and resulted in a greater flow of communication.

Many of the participants mentioned they often attempted to find this information out from caregivers and teachers etc. during the planning stage, prior to the initiation of the interview. In this example Kirsty knew the child was interested in motor bikes because the child’s mother had mentioned this during a previous interview. Consequently, Kirsty asked about this topic during the rapport phase and wondered whether the connection established as a result of this, led to better communication throughout the remainder of the interview:

*“That she was the one telling me, she had the knowledge and we had got a disclosure from the wee girl about what had happened to her and I don’t know how much can be levied on that we did hit it off if you like and she maybe felt comfortable speaking to me and my colleague.”*

The rapport phase was used by these interviewers as an opportunity to gain the child’s attention through the use of topics that had particular relevance for each child. This child centred approach was thought to facilitate rapport, and enhance communication during the remainder of the interview.

**3.3.8 The rapport phase as a tool in which the interviewer *adjusts* their interview approach based on the individual presentation. Theme 2e – natural interaction**

Some of the interviewers seemed to be frustrated with the overall conceptualisation of rapport building. Many of them mentioned that it should not be seen as a separate phased component of interview protocol, but that rapport building is a naturally occurring part of communication that should be evident when first interacting with any person:

*“You see we tend to put this word rapport into this box as if it’s some magical thing that we do and really its everyday normal introductory social intercourse.”*

They often said it should not be viewed as a ‘tick box’ part of the interview but is a communicative phenomenon that naturally unfolds during an interaction. Nevertheless, because it is a phased component of the protocol the interviewers aimed to make this process seem as natural as possible with the children. Mandy states the importance of making sure the rapport topic is something of relevance to the child:

*“If I was interviewing somebody at school I would start talking about school or “what do you do at school?” y’know but you can start it about anything, you don’t want it to be a sudden out of context thing, it’s got to be relative to either where they are, who they are with, who they live with, y’know what they are interested in.”*

She thought that choosing a topic relevant to the interview context therefore made the rapport process seem like a more natural process that would typically occur during communication:

*“I’m not just asking you questions and looking for answers, we are actually having a conversation here, I think rapport building is about developing as I say rapport in a conversational style as opposed to an interview style.”*

Often the participants would initiate this by focusing rapport topic on the environment, i.e. what the child was wearing, the setting, or if in school the classes they had attended previously etc. Tim comments that by using the environment as the basis for the rapport building the communication was less forced and artificial:

*“Well I think a lot of joint interviews with children are carried out in schools and the child’s either just done a lesson or missing a lesson or involved in something, so your instant start there is about the school and build a rapport around school likewise if they’d just come from P.E. or a sport, so rather than make it a strained conversation for the child it’s quite natural for the child to speak about school because they are in school, you don’t want to go down the line of asking the child all about something and they’re thinking where’s this coming from?”*

Other participants agreed with Tim that when topics are covered that are not based on the setting and context then this often confused children. The content of the rapport conversation they said should centre on these things, and would make the overall communication during the interview less artificial and more natural between the interviewer and child.

In direct relation to this, interviewers also mentioned using the rapport phase as a link to the information covered in the free recall phase. Tim stated that he saw the interview as an investigation from the very beginning, and would often cover topics in the rapport phase that would facilitate discussion of the alleged incidents:

*“I always think there’s always a reason why you’re interviewing the child so if you start with the investigative process by building your scene maybe your locus, your crime , the individuals who may be responsible, make sure you introduce people make sure the child introduces people then there should almost be a natural stage where it goes to the next stage of the interview it should almost happen naturally.”*

In this example the allegation centred around intra-familial abuse and by asking the child about their family and home during rapport building, this then made it easier for him to move on to asking about the family with respect to the allegation. Once again this would seem more of a natural format of interaction for the child that may then allow communication to unfold more easily.

In summary, the participants used the rapport phase to adopt a particular approach for the interview that they believed would be beneficial for facilitating communication, and improving the quality of the interaction. The interviewers are assessing the children based on how they initially present during the rapport phase. Based on these assessments they then use rapport as an opportunity to adjust to the child’s presentation, and consequently overcome some of the communicative barriers that can undoubtedly occur.

**3.3.9 The *psychological outcome* of the rapport phase. Theme 3a - Comfortable**

Making the child feel more at ease by reducing their anxieties was also one of the major sub-categories mentioned by the participants. They often stated that making the child feel comfortable was key to facilitating the communication:

*“I think it’s really important during the rapport phase to make the child feel comfortable in the environment and to make them feel when I say at ease to make them feel to some extent relaxed, comfortable in your presence and comfortable to speak in your presence.”*

Here the interviewer it seems is acknowledging the fact that the child may not ever be fully relaxed, perhaps due to the typical forensic content of these interviews. Nevertheless, their aim is to make them feel comfortable enough to communicate about the alleged incidents with the interviewer. One of the ways in which this was achieved was to increase the child’s understanding (see section 3.3.5 theme 2b). As mentioned above children are often unaware of an interview’s purpose and implications, and this can generate anxiety. By explaining the purpose of the interview during the rapport phase, and demonstrating that the interviewer is there to help the child, this makes the child feel more relaxed about the interview process:

*“And sometimes the rapport may overcome some of that initial thought ehm “actually I though this person was going to be really cold and distant but in fact they are actually okay”, so the rapport phase can actually overcome some of that initial reticence possibly.”*

In this extract the interviewer is referring to the preconceived ideas the child may have generated about the interviewer. Actual exposure to the interviewer during the rapport helped the child see that he wasn’t so bad after all. He acknowledges that this contributed to the reduction in the child’s reticence, and the rapport phase would therefore facilitate communication.

Increasing the child’s level of comfort is also related to the interviewer having demonstrated interest in the child (this is linked with theme 2c, see section 3.3.6). By listening to the child’s interests during the rapport phase the interviewer can convey that they are paying attention to the needs of the child and this makes the child feel more comfortable:

*“Again it relieves the children's anxieties, it shows them you've got an interest in you know what they like doing and what is important to them and that it's probably more important at that particular time you've shown an interest and that which makes them feel comfortable and relaxed and it releases their anxiety.”*

For this interviewer it was essential that they conveyed their interest and concern, and this was key to reducing the child’s anxiety levels. As mentioned above, this was perceived as a communication facilitator.

Interestingly, within the context of comfort, the participants often stated that the rapport phase was a tool that they used throughout the interview to reduce children’s anxieties. Rapport building wasn’t solely confined to the rapport phase but was something the interviewers utilized at various stages of the interview. In this particular example the police officer mentions going back to the topics covered in the rapport phase to calm a distressed child:

*“You can bring it in at different parts and that as well if the child has been distressed, I mean we stopped one time for about 10 minutes with the child so prior to going back in straight into right this is where we left off it was "are you okay are you feeling comfortable now? Are you ready to go on?" We started talking to her about whatever I can remember in terms of how we got her kind of comfortable again, we used books it was a child who liked reading books and that because we had been talking about that in the kind of 10 minutes when she had been upset in that so it came to lead back into that again then back into the interview.”*

This approach is referred to as ‘touching base’ with the child as the interviewer returns to neutral topics to reduce her distress. Communication about her favourite book was an enjoyable topic and may have soothed her. Once the child was calm the interviewer was able to commence with the remainder of the interview. A further example of the flexibility of rapport approach is mentioned with reference to the closure phase:

*“But after that once he had unloaded his burden on you then just spend a bit of time because you don’t want a child to leave an interview under that sort of y’know, having just done that you need to sort of put them back into their natural setting as you find them, so you still have to sort of almost use the rapport building phase to take you out of the interview.”*

Here the interviewer is aware that they have been discussing the allegations which can be quite upsetting for children. He does not want the child to leave on a negative note and part of his closure is revisiting neutral topics initially covered in the rapport phase, in order that the child leaves the interview in a more relaxed state of mind. It is almost a process of re-centring the child before ending communication.

**3.3.10 The *psychological outcome* of the rapport phase. Theme 3b - Respect**

Often the interviewers would refer to respect as a communication facilitator. The children and their wishes were to be respected by the interviewer, and if they weren’t then this could act as a communication inhibiter. Adjusting to the child’s presentation was seen on some level as acknowledging the child’s wishes:

*“And do you want to talk to us today, and if they say no, I wouldn’t continue, because, you’re not gaining that child’s trust or, y’know you’re not starting off on the right foot when they’ve already told you “no I don’t want to talk to you”, but yet here you are still sitting firing questions at me.”*

Here Samantha is stating that she tries to gain an understanding of what the child wants from the rapport phase and then responds to this. She relates this to trust where it’s almost as if the children can then trust that the interviewer will take their concerns on board. This was viewed as an important rapport facilitator. One interviewer mentioned that the child would view it as disrespectful if they have made it evident that they require a specific communicative approach, but the interviewer fails to acknowledge this in some way:

*“You‘re bordering being quite rude, when they’ve made it quite clear they don’t want to talk to you about, crap, and you’re still blethering on about, who’s at number one in the charts and, y’know you’re probably more likely to get their back up.”*

This is related to ‘rapport phase redundancy’ (theme 2a, see section 3.3.4), the child the interviewer is referring to clearly did not want to be involved in a rapport phase. Failure to respond appropriately to the child’s presentation is more likely to have a negative impact on the interaction. It is essential therefore that the interviewer demonstrate during the rapport phase that they have considered the child’s wishes.

‘Respect’ is also associated with developmental stage. More often than not it was the older children and teenagers who would be more explicit about what they wanted from the interview (probably because of increased awareness, see section 3.3.5 above). As mentioned above some of the children in this age group would tend to respond negatively to the rapport phase. A large number of the participants stated that they felt the rapport phase could be artificial with this age bracket:

*“The older ehm children, the kind of young person probably 12 up to 16 I always feel the rapport stage is a bit, I don’t want to use the word, but probably false is, you know it seems a bit, they generally know why you are there to speak to them and if you start speaking to them about things like school or you let the rapport stage go on too long, you get the impression that they are sitting there or they would sit there and say “what are you talking about that for? You are here to speak to me about xyz why are you giving me this flowery stuff?”*

This quote indicates the rapport phase could be a source of confusion for these children and the interviewers often felt they were patronising them when conducting rapport. These young people did not want to be treated like children and clearly felt the rapport phase was doing this. The interviewers would recognize this problem because the child said it explicitly (see above) or were non-responsive during the rapport phase. By abandoning a rapport phase the interviewer would be respecting the child’s wishes:

*“I can think of one quite recently where the boy was the subject of, he was the victim of an assault involving a family member and I was interviewing him in the hospital, and he was very angry and if I had spent very long trying to get to know him and I mean I knew about him and what I talked about at the start was the fact that I knew what had happened and stuff so it wasn’t really a rapport as such and he was very angry and he wanted to, he knew, he was going to have to tell me what had happened and that’s why I was there so I wasn’t, it was late and he had been through a lot at that point in the day and we had to joint interview him at that point because we had somebody detained for it and because of time pressure and everything we had to do it and he wanted to say it so sometimes there would be times where that’s just not going to be appropriate.”*

Molly mentions that the boy was aware of the interview’s purpose and she felt it would have been counterproductive to carry out a lengthy rapport phase. She points out that they did have a brief chat initially and perhaps this would be more appropriate with older children. Rapport building was attempted in some form but not as elaborately as is often the case with younger children.

This raises the question of the necessity of rapport building. In developmental stage (see section 3.3.1 above) it’s highlighted as important for younger children, but as indicated in the example above it can still be conducted in a more reduced form with older children. It may not be required in such a structured format but could be shortened:

*“I’ve seen it with an older child who’s like 15, the rapport phase is this is who I am and they’re quite comfortable to come in and sit down and talk and they’ll see the rapport phase being this is who I am this is what I do and then they’re just wanting to get on and speak about the incident so.”*

Therefore an attempt at rapport building is still carried out for all children regardless of age, but modified dependent upon their presentation during the rapport stage. Rapport’s necessity also links in with it being a natural part of the interaction (see section 3.3.8 above). It seems that interviewers feel that sometimes an attempt at rapport building is required before children will communicate about the allegation:

*“No, for me it doesn’t I suppose I was just using that as an example of how I feel the rapport stage is so important, but you can’t just go into an interview I suppose and try and get to the crux or what you’re really wanting to get from the child without taking the time to speak to the child about general things first of all.”*

Here it seems the interviewer is almost saying that it is good manners to try and attempt to get to know someone before asking them about the allegations. It would be disrespectful to engage in substantive issues without touching on neutral topics to initiate conversation. This also ties in with the ‘demonstrating interest’ theme (see section 3.3.6 above) as the interviewer can convey their interest in the child and show they are genuinely concerned with what is happening in the child’s life:

*“It’s about building up this trust it’s about making the kid realise they are being listened to and being taken seriously and everything else.”*

Here the interviewer is stating that they demonstrate interest by showing they are listening to the child and appreciate their concerns. Once again this behaviour during the rapport phase communicates respect for the child and their situation, which could have a positive impact on the quality of the interaction. One of the consequences of respect is the transfer of control from interviewer to child. In the following excerpt the interviewer describes how control is shifted during the rapport phase:

*“It also gives the child, a sort of feeling that he’s in control of the actual conversation, rather than it being the adult that’s eh always asking the questions, ehm I just get the feeling that sometimes y’know that the child actually has something to say.”*

In the rapport phase the child is answering questions about themselves and is the main source of information. By showing the child they are listening to what they have to say this may then empower the child and encourage communication:

*“Because I would say a lot of the time kids let you speak kids let you control the interview to start off with I find that, that they are quite happy for you to take control and I find that they are quite happy with that ehm but once they get into their talking it’s funny because when I think back to it now you do see it totally switching you see glimpses of it in the rapport phase.”*

In this excerpt the interviewer is mentioning the power asymmetry that normally exists in adult-child interactions with interviewers having the majority of control. Through discussing the child’s interests in the rapport phase this then would balance the asymmetry and empower the child. This is a sub-component of respect as power is related to this concept. The children were being listened to in the rapport phase which showed the interviewer respected what they had to say, which in turn increased the child’s perception of control.

**3.3.11 The *psychological outcome* of the rapport phase. Theme 3c - Trust**

The final psychological outcome is trust. Most of the interviewers referred to the rapport phase as establishing some level of trust with the children. They acknowledged that often the information disclosed could be sensitive in nature and the children required the trust to facilitate disclosure. The rapport phase was instrumental in achieving this. Often this started in the rapport phase and was related to making the child feel comfortable:

*“Just a combination of all these things it’s, you’ve got to think the vast majority of kids have never seen these two people in their life so why should they trust them with what could be the most important thing in their life.”*

Tim is pointing out here that the children have to learn to trust the interviewer, whom they have never met before. The information they are giving is often sensitive in nature and the children need time to get to know the interviewer first before trusting them enough to disclose this. The rapport building phase often helps with this.

Part of establishing trust was also about demonstrating honesty in the rapport phase. By showing the child that the interviewer could be open and honest with them when answering questions about the interview’s purpose, the child could learn to trust the interviewer with their information:

*“They tell you, what might potentially happen because no point in lying and, a lot of the time when children have asked, “oh is my daddy going to get locked up?” or, y’know there’s no point in me turning round and going “oh no, of course he’s not” when potentially he could, they’ll never trust another police officer again.”*

In this excerpt the interviewer feels that a more straightforward approach was necessary for establishing trust in the interview. These types of questions more often than not are asked during the rapport phase and this gives the interviewer the opportunity to show that they can be trusted.

Trust is also related to the identity of the alleged perpetrator. In intra-familial abuse allegations the child has to communicate about abuse at the hands of a family member. In the following example the social worker Mandy explains the importance of being honest with these children:

*“I mean there’s so many reasons there’s other reasons that their allegations could be against their mum and dad and they are so loyal to them and you can’t trick them or anything like that into making a disclosure, you have to y’know explain to them you’re here to help everybody, obviously that depends on the circumstances and the child but you have to try and get in a certain way to them sometimes that even though they are still your mum and dad at the end of the day, we need to know what happened so you do have to, there’s not a clear cut way of buying into the kids trust but that’s why you have to adapt the kid.”*

Mandy is saying that the children may lack motivation to communicate information about their parents that could have negative implications for their family. Establishing trust by being honest and responding to the child’s individual presentation would assist in overcoming this communicative barrier. Explaining the interview’s purpose and the interviewer’s goal would help build this trust and hopefully initiate communication. Again, because the interview’s purpose is often covered in the rapport phase this provides the ideal opportunity for the interviewer to be truthful and gain the child’s trust.

**3.3.12 Play in the rapport building phase – practitioner comments**

This sub-section of the analysis is focused upon the practitioners’ comments about the use of play during rapport building. Information relating to this was not incorporated into the theory outlined above. The questions asked about play were not intended to contribute to the theory. However, many of the points made by the interviewers do relate to some of the categories already mentioned (this is discussed in greater detail in part 4 of this chapter). Instead the questions about play were asked with the purpose of exploring the practitioners’ use of play, with the aim of using the information generated to assist with the design and implementation of a play method of rapport building. The implementation of play rapport during mock child forensic interviews is further examined in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

The comments given were far less in number than those elicited for other questions in the interview. The questions asked were also very specific in order to generate particular information about the possible communicative advantages/disadvantages of play rapport (see Appendix D). At no point did the interviewer state that they planned on researching this topic further. This was in order that the responses given were spontaneous and not influenced by an attempt to please the interviewer. The responses can be divided into three distinct themes: the positive impact of play, the negative impact of play and play rapport’s implementation.

***The positive impact of play***

The most commonly mentioned advantage of the use of play during rapport building was that it increased communication between the interviewer and child. In the following example Tim describes what happened as a result of playing foosball with a 15 year old boy he was interviewing:

*“Without a doubt if I’d, well he didn’t want to speak to me he wanted to play foosball with his pals so I said “well I’ll play you” and he ended up speaking whereas if I hadn’t done that he probably wouldn’t have wanted to speak to me.”*

Tim points out that the boy initially did not want to engage in conversation, but because he played foosball with him Tim believed this opened up the channels of communication. In the next example with a social worker Kerry, she tried a play technique with a younger child aged 3:

*“I wondered out into the garden and she was jumping on the trampoline and I sort of started talking about the trampoline and she was showing me different moves I think she was about 3 and a half ehm, and then she asked me if I wanted to have a go and I had a go and then the police officer decided that this was a good idea and then the two of us ended up on the trampoline, and me asking her the questions and the police officer scribing and it was a very successful interview actually.”*

Kerry followed the child’s lead here and decided to use the play in the environment to help ask the questions. She states this interview was successful and implies this was as a result of playing with the child on the trampoline. A reason why this approach is considered successful is explained by Tim:

*“I think it’s something they can relate to, y’know if you’re 4 then play is a massive part of your life and sitting down on the couch and answering questions isn’t so.”*

He is stating that for young children play, is something they are used to communicating with. The typical format of simply sitting down and asking the child about neutral topics isn’t as familiar for children. He is saying that the play approach is more developmentally appropriate. In support of this Mandy, a social worker who frequently uses play during rapport and the interview, stated:

*“Well I think children can communicate much better through play.”*

She was referring to a time when she used train toys during rapport building with a young boy. She felt it also opened up the channels of communication for her and that some of the children she has interviewed have found it easier to speak through the use of play. Some of the participants mentioned that play can help them engage with the child and capture their attention:

*“I’ve certainly gone in and a wee one’s maybe been sitting on the floor playing with something and I’ll go down and ask them about it, and use that use their game to, to get them to talk y’know to tell me about what they’re doing and, what they’re playing with and tell me about the what this is that you’re doing.”*

This example from Sophie, a police officer, demonstrates how she used the fact that the child was already playing to get them to talk to her. This was the basis for their communication. Another police officer Molly commented that initially she had a child that was hesitant to communicate with her, but using play encouraged communication:

*“I went through and I suppose I just kind of played with her for a bit because she was, she wasn’t going to be ready to speak to me anyway so I just played with her and asked her about her toys and y’know that kind of, it’s just what I would do with any child that was reluctant to speak to me to start with I would just start with talking to them about what they are doing.”*

The young girl being interviewed had initiated the play and once again this officer used it as a starting point for the communication. As the child was already playing it was possible that she would be willing to communicate about this with Molly. As well as initiating conversation it was also described as a technique to facilitate the relationship between the interviewer and child:

*“It was up here actually the specific one I’m thinking of, the boy did not want to speak to anyone, not a soul and you saw the Lego and you could see him going like that y’know sort of looking at it and I said “do you like Lego?” “Ugh” and I got a grunt and I said “there’s a box in here and it makes a car”, y’know you get these boxes where all the pieces make the one thing and I said “but I’ve never been able to get it to go together, do you want a shot?” and he perked his ears up and took the box off me and the two of us sat on the floor and he built the car.”*

This example was once again given by the social worker Kerry. In support of the previous statements she too was encountering a reticent child and she recognized the desire for play when she saw him glance at the Lego box. She then gave the impression that she would need his help to complete the car and both of them worked on it together. She never explicitly stated that it improved communication, but she gives the impression that it improved the quality of the interaction.

***The negative impact of play***

As well as the advantages of play for communication and rapport the interviewers did also mention its negative influence. The main criticism was related to the idea that it could act as a distraction for the child. Gerry, a police officer, had found that play could disrupt the interview process:

*“He wasn’t interested in any of my questions so like I won’t do that again, ehm so I would never, I would never take toys into an interview ehm if they’ve got a favourite teddy that they want to have with them that’s fine but, I would never offer up a toy to be taken into the interview because it just some of my experience is it just ehm, too much of a distracter for the kids.”*

The boy he was interviewing was enjoying the play too much and so wouldn’t engage in answering questions about the alleged incident. This had such a negative impact for Gerry that he states he would never again allow toys during his interviews. Another officer Geoffrey asserted that he found play a barrier to communication:

*“I tend to make sure the room if it’s in an environment I’ve been in before to make sure the room’s cleared, ehm obviously if it’s in a child’s own house, I remember doing an interview once with a wee boy who had a car, and it was just such a barrier you couldn’t believe, he just would not, focus on why we were there not obviously he was wanting to, he was using the car, but it was a total barrier so I don’t, no playing’s not something I’ve encouraged.”*

This is obviously in direct contrast to some of the positive statements made in the section above. For this officer the play acted as a communication inhibitor as opposed to a facilitator. The child seemed to be using the car purposefully to distract the interviewer and prevent communication about the alleged incident.

Another negative was that some of the practitioner’s had never felt it was necessary to bring in play to assist with rapport building. Although above Sophie mentioned engaging with the child when they were already using play, she states that she hasn’t ever felt the need to introduce play for rapport building herself:

*“ I’ve never needed to use it but obviously I’m taking that chance by not taking it in the first place expecting that they are going to speak to me but thinking back to all of the interviews I’ve done, I wouldn’t have got more out of the kid using play.”*

She acknowledges that she has had no practise in doing this but she feels play would not have enhanced the interview in any way. Kirsty, another police officer, also comments that she hasn’t felt the need to use play:

*“I haven’t personally felt as if there’s any need for me to do that but in saying that using the same scenario as the 4 year old child playing here with dollies on the floor, and if they asked me in an interview “you play with my dolly” I suppose I would. I really wouldn’t see any harm in that.”*

Therefore, she does not indicate that this is because she believes play would have a negative influence. It seems she would be quite willing to engage in play.

***Play rapport’s implementation***

Some of the participants mentioned important factors that they felt must be considered if using play with the child. One of the first was the child’s age. Many participants stated that play would be more appropriate with younger children, but would be of limited benefit with teenagers:

*“With very small children yeah and I think that, when you are dealing with 3/4/5 year olds play is basically your rapport building is a lot of the times based on play.”*

Tim is saying that with children who are in the younger age bracket, quite often he uses a play based rapport building approach. Kerry comments on the reasons why she believes it would be less successful with teenagers:

*“Because particularly when you get to teenagers they don’t want you to be like them. Teenagers are quite possessive of their own world, their own space, they will happily discuss music with you but they’re not usually so keen in you joining in their activities because you’re too old.”*

She feels that teenagers are in the process of creating their own identity and would not want the interviewer to try and relate to them in this way. She also mentions the fact that the teenagers are aware of the age of the interviewers. This highlights that young people may find the use of play by the interviewer inappropriate. Nevertheless, this may be dependent upon the play’s format as in the previous section Tim mentioned the success of using foosball to initiate communication with a 15 year old boy. The interviewer found ‘common ground’ with the young person and made sure that whatever activity was chosen matched well with the child.

Finally, some of the participants stated that they would tend to use play during rapport building only if it was introduced by the child. Gillian felt it was only necessary if the child was not responding to the open ended verbal type of rapport typically used during the rapport phase:

*“Yes if you keep the stuff there near them but don’t you be the one to put the focus on it because that’s probably about your uncomfortableness, and you are trying very quickly to get them engaged on something. If the stuff is there and they automatically go to it great if they don’t and verbally yous are beginning to … don’t even bring it in.”*

She was adamant that the use of the play should be instigated by the child otherwise it was more about how the interviewer felt as opposed to the needs of the child. This is supported by the fact that more often than not when the participants discussed the use of play during the rapport phase, they spoke about it in the context of the child already playing in the first place. Only in one example did it seem that the practitioners had purposefully brought play materials into the interview with them to establish rapport and influence communication.

**3.4 Discussion**

**3.4.1 Summary**

The core category generated from the analysis of the interviews was that the forensic interviewers used rapport building as a tool to facilitate communication with the children. This was achieved in three ways with each component involving specific sub-categories: (1) to assess the child’s presentation during the rapport phase (developmental stage, willingness to communicate and child’s background), (2) as a means to adjust rapport building approach with the aim of facilitating communication (rapport redundancy, understanding, demonstrating interest, engagement and natural interaction) and (3) to produce a psychological outcome in the child that would benefit communication (comfortable, respect and trust). Finally, when asked about play during the rapport building phase interviewers responses could be sub-divided into three main categories: the positive impact of play, the negative impact of play and play’s implementation.

**3.4.2 The rapport phase as a communication tool**

The theory that forensic interviewers use rapport building as a tool to facilitate communication with children is, in some ways, to be expected. Interview guidelines state that this phase should be used for a variety of purposes including explaining the aims of the interview to the child, making the child feel more at ease, conveying to the child they are the central focus of the interview, gaining an understanding of the child’s communication ability, and their level of cognitive and social development (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). All of these factors were touched on by the interviewers in this study.

Nevertheless, what *is* surprising is the variety of different ways in which the interviewers use the rapport phase as a communication tool. Many of the diverse strategies employed are not touched on in the guidelines, which may lead us to assume the same could be said of interviewer training. Furthermore, the interviewers themselves often communicated their surprise at the complexity of their rapport approach. It wasn’t until they were asked questions with respect to its function and how it is implemented, that many of the strategies were uncovered. It seems that the interviewers were employing these communicative tactics without conscious awareness of their approach. Many stated that upon agreeing to do the interview they were concerned that they wouldn’t have much to say. However, the majority of the time the qualitative interviews had to be cut short due to time constraints, and at no point did any participant seem to dry up with respect to things to say. This is perhaps reflective of the initial concern that rapport building is an under researched component of investigative interviewing with children, and is given little emphasis during training and in guidelines (La Rooy et al., 2010). It would appear that through practise, interviewers are implementing diverse strategies that they believe have a direct impact upon communication.

In addition, it would seem that rapport approach is also greatly affected by children’s individual differences. Interviewers mentioned having to adjust their rapport strategy based upon a number of factors including the age of the child, the reluctance of the child, the alleged perpetrator and the type of allegation. Whilst adhering to best practice, interviewers are encouraged to adopt a child centred approach to interviewing that allows them to be flexible based on the child’s individual presentation (Home Office, 2011). Nevertheless, the range of individual differences and their implications are not explicitly dealt with in guidelines. Once again this could be due to a lack of awareness (La Rooy et al., 2010). Consequently, experimental research that involves the deconstruction of rapport building and how it is operationalized is required.

**3.4.3 Assessment in the rapport phase**

The first way in which rapport building is used as a tool was found to be with respect to assessing the child. Once again, this is mentioned during training and guidelines with reference to gaining an understanding of the child’s cognitive and communication ability (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). From the current findings it would appear that the interviewers in this study are using it for this purpose also. This is reassuring as the previous research demonstrates the cognitive, and in particular memory performance, differences in children’s communication (Lamb & Brown, 2006). The age of the child impacts greatly upon their ability to recall information, and it is important that the interviewers assess this initially in the interview and adapt their questioning approach based on their assessment (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). This Vygotskian (1962) style of interviewing means the interviewer can gauge the child’s actual level of communication in the rapport phase, and provide communicative scaffolding that will boost their *potential* level of communication.

Willingness to communicate was cited as another important aspect for the interviewers to consider during rapport building. This would give the interviewers an initial impression of how reluctant children may be, and how to structure the rapport phase with regards to increasing the child’s motivation. The participants often mentioned that this could interact with the identity of the alleged perpetrator and the type of allegation. This is in support of previous research showing that children who disclose about family members and friends are more reluctant than those whose allegations focus on strangers (Malloy et al., 2011). In addition, children disclosing sexual allegations are more embarrassed and sometimes ashamed about these experiences, and this can impact upon communicative motivations (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003). The participants stated they would often spend longer in the rapport phase if this was their initial assessment. They felt they required more time to build trust with these children and reassure them that disclosure was the correct thing to do. Obviously interviewers cannot state this explicitly to the child, but increased rapport would perhaps make them more comfortable about communicating these issues with the interviewer.

These suggestions find support in the previous literature that indicates information benefits and anxiety reduction when children are provided with increased interviewer support (e.g. Goodman et al., 1991). In addition, Davis and Bottom’s (2002a, b) resistance efficacy theory states children who are given greater support perceive themselves as better able to resist interviewer suggestion. Perhaps children who are initially reluctant feel more confident communicating to the interviewer when a socially supportive atmosphere is provided. Once again the intricacies of individual differences in children and their experiences, and how these interact with rapport building have never been researched and are not mentioned in practice guidelines. The potential of rapport building for increasing communication in these circumstances must be highlighted to practitioners.

***Age differences***

Differences in the rapport phase’s effectiveness, based on children’s age, were a central theme for the category of ‘assessment’, and this was a recurring theme throughout the emerging theory. Interviewers are taught the communicative differences that are likely to emerge during the interview as a result of age (Lamb & Brown, 2006). However, it can be argued that how this interacts with rapport approach has, until now, been largely neglected. According to this sample of interviewers, there are vast differences in how rapport building affects communication when age is considered. Overall, it would appear the interviewers believed it was essential for younger to mid aged primary school children, but was not a necessity for older children and teenagers. Younger children were often cited as the most reluctant to communicate as a result of lack of understanding about the interview, preconceived ideas, and increased anxiety.

This is in support of previous research demonstrating reduced recall and communication in the younger age bracket (Ornstein & Haden, 2002). More often than not this is cited with respect to cognitive limitations as opposed to the social factors mentioned in this study. Nevertheless, the social support literature has tended to focus upon 3 to 7 year old children, and has found increased interviewer support has communicative benefits in terms of the suggestibility of child witnesses (e.g. Carter et al., 1996). These findings indicate that support from interviewers has important communicative advantages for younger children. These studies do not however, make specific reference to rapport building as the support mechanism. Only in Roberts et al’s (2004) investigation of an open style of rapport building has previous researchers *suggested* the socio-communicative benefits of this stage. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 in this thesis empirically address the possible age differences in communication, as a result of rapport building, in more detail.

Interestingly, the majority of the interviewers have had a negative experience in using a structured form of rapport building with older children and teenagers. They found them less willing to engage in rapport building and attempts at this could often generate a hostile response from this age group. To date, no research has explicitly investigated or uncovered this individual difference. Common sense would probably indicate to the interviewers that an elaborate form of rapport building may not be necessary as the young person’s maturity will render an understanding of the interview’s aims and functions. Nevertheless, the majority of the interviewers questioned in this study had at some point made this mistake with older children. It would seem that this age difference in response to rapport only becomes apparent during practice, which would indicate that it is not covered during training. It seems that new interviewers must be made aware of this potential difference and judge this based on the child’s individual presentation.

From a developmental perspective this difference in response to rapport building from older children, and especially teenagers, makes sense. This age group marks a change in how children develop a sense of self and identity (Meeus et al., 2010). In terms of social development, adolescence is the stage in which humans begin to generate a greater sense of who they are, and are motivated to see themselves as distinct from other people (Saywitz, 2002). Often this involves a desire to be viewed more from an adult-like as opposed to a child-like perspective (Meeus et al., 2010). The interviewers pointed out that it was essential that they conveyed to the teenagers that they were taking their concerns seriously. A structured form of rapport building they said could be confusing for these young people and as one interviewer stated “dismissive of their trauma”. It is therefore not surprising that many interviewers stated this could have a negative impact upon the quality of the subsequent interaction. Whether or not, in reality, this affects communication needs to be further investigated. Nevertheless, the findings from this study indicate that interviewers must be careful not to patronise these young people when trying to establish a relationship, and be aware that they are sensitive to being treated with respect.

***Is the rapport building phase always necessary?***

In circumstances in which the interviewers received a negative response to rapport building, or if the child seemed ready to disclose without rapport, then the rapport building phase was often omitted. This highlights that the rapport phase tends to be used to create a positive interaction and increase communication. If these are already in place, or rapport is having the opposite effect, then the rapport phase becomes redundant for the interviewers. This is in direct contrast to interview guidelines that state the rapport phase should *never* be omitted (Scottish Executive, 2011). The majority of the interviewers expressed strong opinions about this and were concerned that although the omission of the rapport phase benefited the child, this created adverse outside perceptions of the interview (e.g. from managers and in court). This could perhaps explain why interviewers frequently engage in a structured rapport phase with adolescents. They could be concerned with outside assessments of their interview technique, and how this could impact upon the perceived credibility of the child witness. The guidelines are there to offer ‘guidance’ to interviewers on best practice based on practical experience and research based evidence. However, it is difficult to offer explicit guidance on rapport building if the empirical literature is sparse. As the rapport phase is used by interviewers to assess the child, and can form the basis for interview technique, then interviewers should be permitted to justify a part of their interview approach on their experiences and responses to rapport building. If this means abandoning the rapport phase in favour of facilitating the interaction and subsequent communication, then interviewers should be supported when doing so.

**3.4.4 Adjustment of interview approach in the rapport phase**

The interviewers also used the rapport phase as a mechanism for adjusting their approach for the purposes of facilitating communication, e.g. if a young child appeared confused or reluctant then the interviewers would use the rapport phase to increase the child’s understanding of the interview process. This was mentioned as four distinct approaches: increasing understanding, engaging the child, demonstrating interest and creating a natural interaction. The first two themes are more commonly mentioned in the guidelines and literature than the latter two. Interviewers are frequently told to explain the interview’s purpose and structure to the child during the rapport phase to increase the child’s understanding (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). As mentioned above, this links in with age differences as it seems understanding is more relevant for rapport building with younger children, as older children’s maturity renders them more aware of the interview’s function and implications. Some participants also mentioned ‘understanding’ with respect to using the rapport phase to set the tone for the interview. This supports research by Sternberg et al. (1997) and Robert’s et al. (2004) showing that an open style of rapport gives children an indication of, and an opportunity to rehearse, the structure of the substantive phase.

Engaging the child’s attention was also frequently mentioned as a purpose of rapport building. This is not surprising as Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal’s (1990) rapport theory shows attention to be a primary indicator of rapport. For rapport to be evident participants in an interaction must be interested in what each other is saying or doing. Within the context of forensic interviewing, for some children who are willing communicators, this may not always be necessary. However, for children who are less motivated, communication seems to be encouraged by initiating conversation about topics they are interested in, e.g. television programmes, sports. One of the interviewers explained this as “you have to get that little in sometimes”. It’s almost as if they are saying the child may initially be reluctant, but if you can capture their attention in some way then that opens the channels of communication.

Directly related to this was the concept of ‘demonstrating interest’. The interviewers reported that it was important to appear interested in the child and what they had to say. This was more than listening skills however, it was about letting the child know the interviewer cared about them and was taking their concerns seriously. Once again this ties in with the social support literature. Social support seems to work better when carried out by the interviewer than a peer (Greenstock & Pipe, 1996, 1997). This would indicate that some of the interview anxiety was related more to the interviewer than the interview itself. One interviewer stated that appearing attentive humanised the interviewer to the child. This supports the idea that often children have pre-conceived ideas about these interviewers, and police officers in particular. These pre-conceptions may increase children’s anxiety (e.g. Carter et al., 1996). Altering this perception in the rapport phase, through showing interest, could then make the child feel more comfortable about communicating with the interviewer.

The final aspect of ‘adjustment’ in the rapport phase was conceptualized as ‘natural interaction’. It appears that the interviewers thought it was important that the rapport phase was more of a natural conversation rather than a phased component of the interview. To them, rapport building is a necessary part of getting to know someone, and the idea of it being a forced exercise wasn’t conducive to communication. This perception of rapport fits in with the initial conceptualisation of it being a form of natural discourse that people readily engage in when getting to know each other (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). This would perhaps support the statement in the guidelines that rapport should never be omitted. However, we think the point the interviewers are making is that although it’s a communicative tactic used when getting to know someone, it should never be forced. If it is not necessary then it shouldn’t be applied. Myklebust and Alison (2000) highlighted this when analysing interviews conducted in the memorandum format. They said sometimes the rapport phase came across as a ‘mechanical’ exercise that wasn’t used for the purposes of building a relationship. Based on this, interviewers need to be aware of the rapport phase’s function from a communicative point of view. It is not another ‘tick box’ exercise that they need to cover in the interview, e.g. like the ground rules. It is an element of everyday conversational discourse that is used when building a relationship and is necessary for communication.

Another interesting feature of this is how some of the interviewers structured the rapport phase to make it appear more natural. Many of the participants used the environment surrounding the interview, or temporal cues, for this purpose. For example, they would ask about a toy that the child was playing with, or what class they had just came from, or about Christmas/Halloween etc. if it were that time of year. They stated it was important to select a topic that was relevant to the current situation. This approach would make rapport building seem a more natural part of the conversation. They said that if they mentioned something that was not immediately obvious, then the child could look confused and uncomfortable. Children from a young age are aware of everyday communicative conventions, and would probably understand the interviewer’s attempts to build rapport when the current physical/social context was used (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003). In contrast, a randomly selected topic would seem out of place within the framework of the interview. Once again these issues relate to the interviewer’s understanding of rapport’s function. During training and in the guidelines, interviewers should be made aware that although rapport has many uses, from a communicative perspective, it is a natural part of conversation. Whether it is required, and how it should be applied is different for each and every child.

**3.4.5 The psychological outcome in the rapport phase**

The interviewers stated that their efforts to adjust their approach during rapport often resulted in increased communication from the children, e.g. increasing the child’s understanding of the interview’s purpose. However, they often explained this with reference to a psychological outcome that was the result of the adjustment. It was this behavioural change/outcome in the child that served to facilitate the communication.

By far the most commonly cited outcome was ‘comfortable’. Interviewers often stated that their behaviour in the rapport phase resulted in the child feeling more relaxed, more at ease and less anxious. This theme is often mentioned during training, in the guidelines and the previous social support literature. In particular, anxiety reduction is one of the proposed theories involved in the benefits of interviewer-provided social support (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007). Children have been found to be more accurate when interviewers are supportive. Anxiety is thought to interfere with the child’s cognitive processing. By reducing anxiety the child is less likely to make errors, and is better able to use effective retrieval strategies during recall (Almerigogna et al., 2007). This cognitive perspective of the anxiety reduction hypothesis however, was not touched on by the interviewers in the present study. They tended to explain anxiety reduction with reference to the mechanisms they used to make the child feel more comfortable. For example, they thought increasing the child’s understanding about the interview would decrease anxiety by counteracting the child’s pre-conceived ideas.

The information provided by the interviewers in this study enhances the anxiety reduction model, by offering some insight into how social support is operationalized within the context of rapport building. When considering both the cognitive perspective and the findings from the present study together, the approaches carried out by the interviewers may serve to reduce anxiety and make the child feel more comfortable, which in turn facilitates their cognitive processing, and leads to recall and communicative benefits. Once again, experimental research is required to pin point these behavioural approaches in the rapport building phase, to track their possible impact upon anxiety and communication.

The alternative theory proposed for social support is Davis and Bottom’s (2002a, b) resistance efficacy theory (see section 1.5.3). Within the context of the ‘psychological outcome’ component of our model, it relates to the theme of ‘respect’. Interviewers often stated that acknowledging the child’s wishes would create an element of respect between them and child. This was carried out in a variety of ways, e.g. relinquishing the rapport phase if the child made it clear that they were willing to communicate, appearing interested in the child and taking their concerns seriously, or focusing on neutral topics that were relevant (natural interaction) and interesting for the child (engaging the child). These approaches would make the interview more child-centred and perhaps convey that the child was the central focus of the interaction. According to resistance efficacy theory, when a child is supported by the interviewer this increases their confidence and empowerment (Davis & Bottoms, 2002a, b). This empowerment then has information benefits in that children perceive themselves as better able to communicate and resist interviewer suggestion. Perhaps social support is sometimes operationalized in the interview, during rapport building, where consideration of the child’s presentation and their wishes, empowers children and increases their perception of themselves as valuable contributors.

Interestingly, this was often mentioned by the interviewers within the context of older children. As stated above, this age group are in the stage of social development in which autonomy and individual identity are increasingly important (Meeus et al., 2010). Therefore, consideration of the young person’s wishes during the rapport phase may be an effective communicative facilitator for this group of children. Anxiety reduction could still be of benefit, but as these children have a greater understanding of the interview and its implications, then anxiety may be less likely to be a communication inhibitor for this age group. This may explain why a relationship between social support and resistance efficacy was found only for the older children in Davis and Bottom’s study (2002a, b). Once again, practice guidelines and training should emphasise the importance of respect, particularly for older children, and how this may reduce the power imbalance and act as a communicative facilitator during the interview.

**3.4.6 Play in the rapport phase**

Exploring the interviewers’ perceptions of play during the rapport phase was a separate aim of this study. The responses to this therefore are not conceptualised within the theoretical framework discussed thus far. Overall, only a small number of participants (*N* = 5) had any direct experience of play in the rapport building phase, and an even smaller number (*N* = 3) had purposefully used it to establish rapport with children they were interviewing. This could be indicative in itself that those interviewers do not feel an alternative rapport approach is necessary. In fact, this was mentioned in response to play rapport in the current study. However, as research by La Rooy et al. (2010) has shown, interviewers are confident that their rapport technique works, but we have no indication of how it is being carried out and whether it is truly effective. In addition, at this point in time, they do not know whether it would be an effective communication facilitator or not. The time has come for research on different rapport building approaches, with empirically based supporting evidence on how they impact on communication and rapport.

A further concern was that play could act as a communication inhibiter by distracting the child. This is an important consideration in the implementation of play rapport. As mentioned previously, some of these children are reluctant and are not motivated to communicate with the interviewer (Hershkowitz et al., 2006). Any opportunity to suppress information may be grasped by these children. Nevertheless, this could be dependent upon the structure of the play rapport task. Our collaborative play method involves constructive play, in which the children build or make something. This method of play therefore has a completion stage. With the task ended this may naturally bring the rapport stage, and the play, to a close. This concern is covered in more detail in chapter 4 where play rapport’s communicative impact is empirically tested.

In terms of the interviewers’ positive experiences of play, those who had used it stated that it opened the channels of communication in the interview. They said play was more developmentally appropriate, and was a more natural way in which to first engage in communication with the child. This is in opposition to the open style of rapport building which involves questioning the child about neutral topics using face to face communication (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). Interviewers felt play rapport was of benefit as the materials often captured the child’s attention and helped them engage in the interaction. This would support theme 2d of the current rapport theory where the interviewers described the importance of gaining the child’s interest for the purposes of communication. Structuring the rapport phase on a topic that appeals to the child may facilitate the communication process. In addition, if the play was introduced by the child, or the child brought a toy into the interview situation, then the interviewers used it to initiate conversation. This supports theme 2e of the theory that states the importance of using the environment to initiate rapport topic. It seems that when the child was playing this provided the ideal opportunity to establish communication on a subject the child would find appealing.

Some interesting points were raised by the practitioners that impact upon the practice of play rapport. Firstly, some of the interviewers mentioned only involving play if it was introduced by the child. The reasons for this however, were never made explicit. This is in direct contrast to our aim of using it as a rapport building tool. In order for it to be assessed it has to be initiated by the interviewer. Perhaps this concern is highlighted only because of a lack of knowledge about the possible communicative impact of play rapport. Empirical research, such as that covered in chapters 4-6, is required to investigate this further.

Finally, the interviewers felt play would be of limited use with older children. Developmentally this is logical as the frequency of play behaviour decreases as children get older (Davy & Gallagher, 2006). In addition, if older children and adolescents are striving to create their own identity and be treated with respect then engaging in play tasks, which are typically associated with childhood, may not be the best approach to facilitate the interaction. Nevertheless, once again this may be dependent upon the type of task chosen. In section 3.3.12 Tim found foosball was an effective medium for connecting with the 15 year old boy he was attempting to interview. Consequently, it is important that the tasks chosen are developmentally appropriate for each child. The rapport model generated through the present study and the interviewers’ comments on play rapport are considered in further detail when investigating play rapport’s impact in chapter 4.

**3.4.7 Methodological considerations**

Some of the study’s limitations are covered in the reflexivity section in 3.2.4. It is important to consider these here within the context of the entire chapter. The experiences and perspectives covered in the current research are from Scottish practitioners only. Countries and jurisdictions differ with regards to the training and management of forensic interviewers, in addition to how interviews are assessed in judicial proceedings (La Rooy et al., 2010). As such, this must be considered when evaluating the responses given by the participants in this study. Nevertheless, we have no empirical reason to doubt the quality of interviews carried out in Scotland, and the guidelines are based on internationally recognized and researched interview protocols.

As mentioned previously, this sample of interviewers may be biased in favour of rapport building as recruitment was voluntary, and only those who have an interest in this aspect of the interview may have participated. This however, may have added to the overall quality of the perspectives, but it has to be acknowledged that the communicative benefits of rapport building may be perceived differently if other interviewers were recruited. Nevertheless, we believe a balanced argument was presented as the necessity for rapport building was still questioned by the participants with reference to particular circumstances (e.g. age differences, willing communicators).

In addition, more police officers than social workers participated. This was out with the researcher’s control as the majority of the participants were recruited by interview trainers through ACPOS. Nonetheless, the responses and the themes generated seemed consistent across both police officers and social workers and this therefore does not seem to have had an effect.

Finally, the rapport components covered in this study are based on the opinions and experiences of the interviewers. They have therefore not yet been subject to experimental testing or observation in a field setting. These must be investigated in further empirical research to explore whether or not these rapport components do in fact influence children’s communication.

**3.4.8 Conclusions**

The findings from the present study have important implications for practitioners working with children in forensic interview settings. There is little information given during training and in international guidelines about how rapport building should be operationalized, and how it impacts upon children’s communication and wellbeing throughout the interview. The theory generated from Scottish interviewers demonstrates that rapport building is an essential tool used by the practitioners for a variety of different purposes, all of which may greatly influence the quantity and quality of evidence elicited from children. Rapport building it seems offers a great opportunity for interviewers to explore their interview technique with each individual child, and adjust their approach for the overall aim of facilitating communication. This study highlights the complexity of the rapport phase and the many factors that have not, to date, been investigated in the forensic interviewing literature. These factors must now be tested empirically in laboratory and field settings for further validation. The theory and its various aspects are used to assist in the interpretation of the experimental findings in subsequent chapters. In addition, practitioner comments about play rapport are also addressed.

**Chapter Four**

**A Collaborative Play Approach to Rapport Building**

**4.1 Introduction**

The overarching aim of this thesis is to investigate the role and functionality of the rapport phase in investigative interviews. One of the rapport approaches examined in this thesis is a ‘collaborative’ play rapport method in which the interviewer and child work together to complete a play task. This rapport technique has never been empirically investigated in the field of forensic interviewing. The idea stems from play rapport’s use in other clinical contexts (for a review see section 2.4). Before exploring collaborative play rapport’s effectiveness within the framework of forensic interviewing, this chapter will examine it purely from a communicative perspective. Specifically, what is the impact of collaborative play rapport on communication and rapport in adult-child dyads? If collaborative play is found to have benefits in the elicitation of information from children, then this would provide justification for its use within the context of child forensic interviews. This chapter will also examine whether there are any possible age or gender differences in the effectiveness of this rapport approach. In addition, this study provides the opportunity to evaluate different collaborative play tasks in order to assess which tasks could be used in subsequent research involving mock forensic interviews.

**4.1.1 Play and children’s development**

Play behaviour is an essential part of children’s social, cognitive and linguistic development (Piaget, 1962). The basis for our understanding of play from a developmental perspective stems from the work of Piaget. He believed that play relates to and enhances children’s cognitive development. For example socio-dramatic play requires a sophisticated level of communication as it involves sharing a fantasy world with others. This activity is thought to enhance children’s understanding of other minds (Dunn, 1988), and occurs most frequently in preschool when children are developing a theory of mind (Fein, 1986). Piaget highlighted that play is a fun and relaxing activity, and this therefore provides the ideal forum for children to practise their developing cognitive skills. This perspective was also shared by Vygotsky (1962) who saw play as an important facilitator for cognitive development, especially during children’s pre-school years. He believed children are able to extend their current cognitive and social development when interacting with others. They can rehearse their own skills, as well as learn from their play mates. Additionally, through play, children can practise their developing motor skills. Play often involves physical activity, e.g. running and skipping, and it also incorporates fine motor skills, e.g. colouring in and drawing. Subsequently, learning in pre-school and early school years involves a substantial amount of play activity (Lifter, Foster-Sanada, Arzamarski, Briesch & McClure, 2011). Policy makers in education recognize that a large amount of learning can be achieved when playing, and it facilitates the process of comprehension in a variety of academic skills (Lifter et al., 2011).

***Types of play***

Parten (1932) was one of the first theorists to produce elaborate play classifications. These were as follows: unoccupied play, solitary play, onlooker play, parallel play, associative play and cooperative play. These types of play are understood with respect to the behaviour that occurs during each. For example, in solitary play the child is focused on their own activity and doesn’t notice or involve other children, whereas in parallel play the child copies other children’s play behaviour but doesn’t join in.

This framework for play behaviour was, for many years, conceptualised with children’s social development (Bergen, 1988). However, recent research has shown that many of these types of play behaviour exist simultaneously within age groups (Rubin, Bukowski & Parker, 1998). For example 5 year olds spend more time in solitary and parallel play than associative or cooperative play; and parallel play is equally carried out in 3 and 5 year olds (Rubin et al., 1998). A further criticism is that this model neglects the cognitive aspects of play (Bergen, 1988). Consequently, in the current play literature play tends to be categorized with respect to play activity as opposed to the social aspects involved. The three activity types are: socio-dramatic play, functional play and constructive play (Broadhead, Howard & Wood, 2010). All of Parten’s (1932) play types may be exhibited in each of the activity categories. In terms of the content, functional play involves physical behaviours such as ball play; socio-dramatic play comprises role-play and pretend activities; and finally during constructive play, children build and make things (Broadhead et al., 2010).

**4.1.2 Play activity in the current study**

***Selection of play task***

The play category used in this experiment is constructive play. The adult and child attempted to build or make something together, e.g. build a car, make a jigsaw or copy a pattern using beads. This type of play was chosen in comparison with the others, as it allowed the interviewer and child to work together to produce a successful outcome. Play rapport’s previous use in other clinical contexts tended to involve functional play, e.g. with a ball (Hudak, 2000). However, the physicality of functional play is not appropriate for an interview situation. Ideally, the structure in the interaction should set the tone for the remainder of the communication, and the forensic interview tends to be conducted face to face with both participants sitting down (Home Office, 2011). Finally, socio-dramatic play is the least suitable play category for an interview. Interviewers are encouraged to refrain from including any aspects of fantasy or make belief in the interview. The concern is that this may increase the risk of confabulation, and reduce the accuracy of the information provided by the child (Everson & Boat, 1997). Constructive play is the least likely to produce this effect as no pretend play is involved (Lifter et al., 2011).

Interestingly, this concern was never mentioned by the practitioners in chapter 3. Their main criticism was that play may inhibit communication by providing a distraction for the child. Some of the interviewers had found in their experience that when the children were not motivated to communicate about the incident, they would use the play as a barrier, and it was difficult for the interviewer to move the child on to the free recall phase. It is possible that constructive play may counteract this effect as it has an end result, e.g. completion of a jigsaw. This play format was selected as it is not conducive to a continuation of play behaviour. This concern will be addressed in the current research when looking at the differences in communication across the rapport protocols. If play is a communication inhibitor, then we would expect to find that children give less information after exposure to collaborative play rapport.

***Developmentally appropriate approach***

One of the hypothesized strengths of collaborative play rapport is that it is developmentally appropriate for children, and would therefore make the interview more child-centred. Indeed, this was the response of some of the practitioners in chapter 3. Play is a natural behaviour spontaneously produced in childhood, and from a young age is a consistent form of communication between children (Lifter et al., 2011). It is possible that using play as the basis for the initial interaction would be a suitable way in which to first engage the child’s attention. ‘Engagement’ was one of the categories uncovered in the rapport building theory from the previous chapter. The interviewers stated it was important to capture the child’s attention during rapport building, and if this was achieved then this would facilitate the interaction. As play is a fun activity, this may be a successful medium in which to gain the child’s interest.

This suggestion is also supported by Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal’s (1990) theory of rapport building. They stated that mutual attention was a critical factor in the production of rapport. Clearly, the interviewer will be focused on the interaction with the overall aim of eliciting information. It is the child’s attention however, which is the more difficult to capture and maintain. A collaborative play task that stimulates their interest may be an effective way of securing their attention. In addition, the interviewer and child would have to focus on the play task in order to complete it. This could also increase the child’s concentration overall.

**4.1.3 Possible psychological benefits**

Once again building on the theory generated in the previous chapter, the interviewers stated that the rapport phase is used as a tool to produce certain behavioural outcomes in the child. Reducing the child‘s anxiety and increasing their level of comfort was thought to be a main effect of rapport building, that in turn facilitated communication. This is maintained in the social support literature that has found support mediates the effects of anxiety which in turn makes children better able to remember information (Almerigogna et al., 2007; Davis & Bottoms, 2002b). Barnett and Storm (1991, see section 2.4.2) found that play acted as a buffer for children’s anxiety levels. Children who played prior to a novel situation were found to have less anxiety than those who didn’t play. Consequently, it is possible that collaborative play rapport may have similar effects to interviewer support in an interview situation. For many children the interview experience is both unfamiliar and anxiety provoking (Lamb & Brown, 2006). Theoretically therefore, it is plausible that collaborative play could reduce these negative effects.

Secondly, respect was often cited by the practitioners as a product of rapport approach. This was interpreted in the previous chapter with reference to Davis and Bottom’s (2002a, b) resistance efficacy theory. Children are offered social support in the rapport phase and this increases their perception of themselves as valuable information providers. This is important because of the asymmetric nature of adult-child interactions (Ceci et al., 1987). These result in an inequality in power distribution which is problematic in a forensic interview situation where the child must understand that they are the central focus of the interview, and information production is derived solely from their own experiences (Lamb & Brown, 2006).

It is possible that collaborative play rapport may reduce the effects of power. During the rapport phase the child is contributing to the task and the interviewer is there to assist. They are told they can select a play task and the interviewer is there to help them produce it. The focus is once again on what the child wants to do and how they think the task should be approached. This may balance the power dynamics in favour of the child, and carry forward to the substantive phase of the interview.

**4.1.4 The rapport phase and adolescence**

It is important to consider how collaborative play rapport may function across different age groups. As mentioned in chapter 3, a central theme in the rapport theory was that children’s responsiveness to the rapport phase was related to their age. Adolescents in particular often found rapport building confusing, and the practitioners felt it was very patronising for this age group, which could negatively affect the quality of the interaction. This was explained in the previous chapter with reference to children’s social development. Adolescents are at stage in which they are forming their own sense of self and identity (Meeus et al., 2010). They become increasingly preoccupied with seeing themselves as distinct and individual from other people, and they want this to be acknowledged and respected by their caregivers and peers.

Consequently, attempts at a highly structured form of ‘play’ rapport may not be appropriate for this age group. Indeed, any mention of play would have to be removed from the interaction, as play is associated with earlier stages of childhood and may be perceived as patronising by adolescents (Davy & Gallagher, 2006). Nevertheless, one of the police officers in the previous study did find it to be of benefit with a 15 year old male he was interviewing when he conducted the interview whilst playing foosball. As such, emphasis should be on the particular task chosen. It would have to be age appropriate, and if the interviewer explained that they were using it to get to know each other better, this justification may seem appropriate to the young person.

A group of adolescents have been included in the current study to fully explore collaborative play rapport’s utility across a wide age range (6 to 14 years). These ages may offer interesting contrasts as they provide a variety of communication abilities and social development. In addition, the teenagers represent a group where the dynamic between adult and child will have shifted considerably, but who would still qualify for special provision in the legal system (Home Office, 2011). These young people are still considered children in the eyes of the law, and can sometimes demonstrate reticence and anxiety about communicating information in an interview situation (Saywitz, 2002). The findings from the current study therefore will add to our understanding of rapport building’s impact with adolescents.

**4.1.5 The purpose of the present study and specific predictions**

The goal of the study was to investigate whether a collaborative play approach to rapport building improves communication and interpersonal rapport in adult-child dyads. This was examined by comparing collaborative play with a solitary play condition. Solitary play acted as a control in which the adult did not interact with the child prior to eliciting information. In addition, the study investigated whether the age and sex of the child interacted with the effectiveness of collaborative play rapport. Constructive play tasks were selected as the method of play. This form of play involves the manipulation of objects to build or create something, and can be based on blocks, other constructional equipment and art materials (Christie & Johnsen, 1987). It requires spatial and representational abilities, all of which are feasible for children aged 4 and over (Christie & Johnsen, 1987). This form was selected as it enables the adult and child to work on a task *together* that can be completed within the typical time frame of the rapport phase (5-10 minutes, Davies et al., 2000; Sternberg et al., 1997). It was neutral in nature and did not involve any fantasy or make believe play. Three different forms of constructive play were selected: building, jigsaws and handicrafts. This was to investigate whether a range of constructive play tasks could be used in subsequent research.

To examine whether completion of the task established rapport, and whether this differed between age groups and gender, 6-7, 8-10 and 12-14 year olds either completed a constructive play task by themselves (solitary play), or with the experimenter (collaborative play), and spoke with the experimenter briefly afterwards about neutral topics. The post rapport phase conversations were video recorded. As mentioned above, these age groups present a variety of socioemotional barriers for successful communication with adults (see chapter 1 for a full review). At 6 - 7 years old children still require some communicative scaffolding during verbal interactions (Lamb et al., 2000). They can also find these verbal exchanges with adults confusing and intimidating (Carter et al., 1996). As such their communication should benefit from improved rapport with adults during interviews. By 8-10 years their verbal skills are increasingly adult like, nevertheless other socioemotional factors, e.g. anxiety, can still impact upon their communication (Almerigogna et al., 2007). Finally, the complexity of adolescent behaviour brings a different set of challenges for interviewers. Their need to exert their own identity, and be accepted as autonomous individuals, requires the rapport relationship to be one based on respect. From the findings from the previous chapter, we expect that collaborative play rapport may produce less rapport and information from this particular age group.

For the present study we predict that, with the exception of the 12-14 year olds, children from the collaborative play condition will have greater rapport levels than those in the solitary play condition, as children will have had the chance to build a relationship with the experimenter through play (e.g. Chethik, 2002; Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1991). We also expect more information after the collaborative play condition as the resultant rapport should facilitate communication with the experimenter (Carter et al., 1996; Goodman et al., 1991). Also in accordance with previous literature we predict developmental differences in information given overall with more detail produced with ascending age groups (Orbach & Lamb, 2000). We predict gender differences as evidence shows females have better interpersonal skills (e.g. Dalton, 1983; Philippot & Feldman, 1990), and consequently often communicate and interact more than male participants (e.g. Burlseon, 1982; Weitz, 1976). As a result, we expect girls will give more information and display greater rapport levels, as measured by the non-verbal indicators, regardless of condition. Finally, with respect to the different constructive play tasks, we expect no differences across age and gender as constructive play is a feasible and enjoyable form of activity for all children (Christie & Johnsen, 1987). Participants in the collaborative play condition were also issued a brief questionnaire to measure their enjoyment of the different tasks. Enjoyment is positively correlated with rapport (Grahe & Sherman, 2007), and we intend to use this information to assist in deciding which tasks may be used in future research.

**4.2 Method**

**4.2.1 Participants**

The study involved 68 school children from six different schools in Scotland. Data from 7 of the children were not included due to technical problems with the video equipment. This left a final sample of 61 children from three different age groups (**6-7 year olds**, *n* = 18, *M* = 88 months, *SD* = 7.84; **8-10 year olds**, *n* = 18, *M* = 114.7 months, *SD* = 8.07; **12-14 year olds**, *n* =18, *M* = 170.25 months, *SD* = 8.06). There were 27 males (**6-7 year olds**; *n* = 9; **8-10 year olds**, *n* = 8; **12-14 year olds**, *n* = 10) and 27 females (**6-7 year olds**, *n* = 9; **8-10 year olds**, *n* = 10; **12-14 year olds**, *n* = 8). The primary aged children were given a certificate in return for participation. Parental and child consent was given prior to the study.

Twenty undergraduate students from the department of psychology at Stirling University rated the video clips of the children to measure the rapport indicators as recommended by Bernieri et al. (1996). All raters were female as previous research has demonstrated females to be more accurate assessors of non-verbal information and communication (Grahe & Bernieri, 1999). Mean age was 24 years (*SD* = 8.30) with a range of 18 to 42. Both children and adults were naive to the experimental aims and hypotheses.

**4.2.2 Materials**

Child participation took place in an empty classroom in the child’s school. Each rapport session was video recorded with a SONY DCR-DVD306E camcorder. The constructive play tasks were age and gender appropriate and selected from an educational resources catalogue. Three different types of constructive play were chosen: building, handicraft and jigsaw. Each task was previously piloted with a small sample of children from each age range, to ensure the tasks could be completed without difficulty and within the 5-10 minute time period normally set aside for the rapport phase. A questionnaire was completed by the children in the play condition (see Appendix J for the version of the questionnaire used with the 6-7 year olds. The smiley faces were removed for the 12-14 year old age group to make it age appropriate). There were nine questions and each question was scored on a likert scale from 1 to 5. The score for each question was added together and then divided by 9 to give the mean enjoyment rating for each child. The minimum score was 1 and the maximum score was 9.

**4.2.3 Design and Procedure**

The study was a 2 (Rapport Type: solitary play *vs.* collaborative play) x 2 (Gender: male *vs.* female) x 3 (Age Group: 6-7 *vs.* 8-10 *vs.* 12-14) x 3 (Task Type: build *vs.* handicraft *vs*. jigsaw) independent measures design. Children were randomly assigned to the Rapport Type and Task Type conditions. Each child was seen individually by the experimenter. Once collected from their classroom the child was taken to an empty classroom, and sat down with the experimenter next to the constructive play task and in view of the camcorder. In the collaborative play condition the child was told that the experimenter needed their help to make the task, and that afterwards they would be asked some quick questions about their day. They were told it wasn’t a test, that they had to work together, and that the child could instruct the experimenter about what to do. They were told the purpose was to help the experimenter decide which play tasks could be used with children in the future. The instructions given with the task were used to guide completion. The majority of the conversation centred on how to complete the task. In addition, the experimenter provided verbal feedback cues about the task and encouraged conversation with the child by occasionally asking about neutral topics e.g. what they were doing in class etc. Directly after the rapport phase the child communicated with the experimenter for a further 3-5 minutes once more about neutral topics. This conversational interaction served as the indication of the rapport level between the experimenter and child. Each child then filled out a questionnaire to assess their enjoyment in carrying out the task with the experimenter.

Children in the solitary play condition were asked to complete the task by themselves, were told it was not a test and the purpose was to help the experimenter decide which tasks could be used with children in the future. The experimenter worked at a desk whilst the child completed the task. Once the task was finished the same procedure was used for the conversational interaction as above. The children in this condition did not complete a questionnaire.

The method of discriminant content validation was used to assess the content validity of the questionnaire (Dixon, Pollard & Johnston, 2006). Twelve psychology postgraduates from Stirling University rated each question in relation to whether it measured enjoyment or not, and how confident they were (%). Each question was given a score of +1 or -1 depending on whether it was rated as yes or no respectively. The score was then multiplied by the percentage confidence rating it was given, and was taken as a proportion. For example, if a person rated a question as yes it measured enjoyment and they were 80% sure then this would be scored as 0.8. One sample t tests were then carried out to see if the rating for each question was significantly different from 0. This gave an indication of whether the question was significantly related to enjoyment or not (Dixon et al., 2007). One sample t tests showed the ratings for all questions but one to be statistically different from 0, all *p’s* < .05. Only the question relating to the ‘difficulty’ of the task was not significant, *t* (11) = 1.5, *p* > .05. This was subsequently removed from calculations of the mean enjoyment level for each participant.

***Assessment of rapport and communication***

Nonverbal behaviours previously found to indicate rapport in adult dyadic interactions were measured to assess level of rapport in each of the conditions (Bernier et al., 1996). The behaviours cited in previous research are expressivity, synchrony and interpersonal distance as they are thought to incorporate rapport’s three psychological components (positivity, mutual attention and co-ordination, Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990, see section 2.2.1). Expressivity and synchrony were rated by the adult student participants from Stirling University (see below for further details, Bernieri et al., 1996). Interpersonal distance could not be measured reliably as the distance between the camera and the participants was not the same across interactions. The interviewer did not make any attempt to control where the child sat other than ensuring it was in view of the video camera. Forcing the child to sit in a specific place may have made them feel uncomfortable which could have impacted upon the rapport between interviewer and child. Mutual eye gaze was also included in this study as a measure of attention and this was coded by the experimenter (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003).

Thirty second clips were extracted from the beginning of each videoed conversational interaction between experimenter and child. Previous research indicates that clips as short as 10 seconds produce reliable ratings of non-verbal behaviour (Bernieri, 2005). All clips were viewed on silent mode as research has found this to be the most effective method for observation of non-verbal cues (Grahe & Bernieri, 1999). These clips were used by the 20 adults to rate synchrony and expressivity (Puccinelli, Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 2003). The video clips were assessed using the computer program E-Prime (version 2). All raters viewed this on a computer in the university Face Perception Lab. They viewed half of the clips one day and the other half 24 hours later. This was to reduce the effects of fatigue on rapport assessment. The order in which the two sets of clips were viewed was counterbalanced across raters, and within each set the order was randomised. Each participant saw the clip twice and was then instructed to rate on a scale from 1-9: (1) how expressive the child was and (2) how synchronized the interaction was (Puccinelli et al., 2003). Definitions of expressivity and synchrony were given prior to starting and on screen along with the instructions.

The experimenter used 3 minute segments of each interaction to code attention. Interactions lasted between 3 and 5 minutes (*M* = 3.55min, *SD* = 2.7). As the length varied the first 3 minutes were coded only. Attention was measured by the time the child spent in mutual eye contact with the experimenter in milliseconds (Doherty-Sneddon, Bruce, Bonner, Longbotham & Doyle, 2002).

Finally, the number of units of information and spontaneous information provided by the child during the conversation were also measured. For example “the car was red” is two verbal units of information, as red and car count as two new pieces of information given by the child (Roberts et al., 2004). The children were asked questions in a style similar to the ABE guidelines with free narrative prompts and open questions first followed by a small number of direct questions (see Appendix A for further information about the structure of the ABE interview). Total information and spontaneous information were coded and calculated. Total information was a measure of the detail of the information (all information given in response to free recall prompts, and open and direct questions). Information was considered spontaneous if it was elicited through a free recall prompts or open-ended questions only (Davies et al., 2000).

**4.2.4 Inter-rater agreement**

An independent rater coded 20% of the interactions from both conditions for the variables of attention, units of information and spontaneous information, using the same interactions for all measures. The scores were 80%, 89% and 81% for attention, units of information and spontaneous information respectively. Two judges also counted a number of the experimenter’s non-verbal behaviours using 10 clips each, to ensure the experimenter displayed consistent behaviour across the rapport conditions. The behaviours coded were; number of head nods, smiling duration (ms), number of verbal facilitators (e.g. ‘uh-huh’), and time spent looking at the child (ms). No differences were found across both conditions, all *p’s* > .05. The student participants rating the video clips also rated experimenter expressivity and no difference was found across conditions, *t* (59) = .93, *p* > .05. These findings therefore indicate that any differences found across rapport type were not due to experimenter behaviour.

**4.3 Results**

A three-way analysis of variance was carried out with Rapport Type (collaborative play and solitary play), Age (6-7, 8-10 and 12-14 year olds) and Gender as the independent measures variables. Significant differences were examined using Tukey’s HSD post hoc test. A power analysis was conducted and the level of power was sufficient. Preliminary analyses found no overall effect for Task Type (build, jigsaw or handicraft) across any of the measures, all *p’s* > .05. This was therefore collapsed across conditions to increase power, and did not receive further consideration. The various rapport indicators will be considered first, followed by the impact of the variables on the children’s information and level of enjoyment.

**4.3.1 Rapport Indicators**

Rapport Type was found to have a highly significant effect on expressivity level, *F* (1, 42) = 8.320, *p*< .01, ηp2= .17 with greater expressivity occurring after collaborative play than solitary play. The effect of Gender approached significance, *F* (1, 42) = 3.9, *p*= .054, ηp2 = .09 with females being more expressive than males. Age had no significant effect, *F* (2, 42) = .21, *p*> .05, ηp2 = .01, and there were no significant interactions between the factors (*p’s >*.05, refer to Table 4.1 for means and standard deviations).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 4.1**  ***Mean Expressivity Rating Across Rapport Type, Age and Gender*** | | | | |
| **Rapport type** | **Age group and Gender** | | | **Total** |
|  | **6-7** | **8-10** | **12-14** |  |
| **Males** | | | | |
| **Collaborative play** | 4.53  (0.94) | 5.04  (1.08) | 4.80  (1.49) | 14.37  (3.51) |
| **Solitary play** | 3.68  (1.83) | 4.93  (0.71) | 3.92  (0.88) | 12.53  (3.42) |
| **Females** | | | | |
| **Collaborative play** | 6.55  (1.84) | 5.54  (1.03) | 5.48  (1.62) | 17.57  (4.49) |
| **Solitary play** | 4.16  (1.05) | 4.42  (0.75) | 4.85  (1.03) | 13.43  (2.83) |
| **Total** | 18.92  (5.66) | 19.93  (3.57) | 19.05  (5.02) | 57.90  (14.25) |

***Note. Standard deviations for each score are in the brackets.***

Neither Rapport Type, *F* (1, 42) = 1.12, *p*> .05, ηp2 = .03 (*M* collaborative play *=* 5.43*;M* solitary play = 5.15); Age, *F* (2, 42) = 2.3, *p*> .05, ηp2= .01 (*M* 6-7 = 4.91; *M* 8-10 = 5.39; *M* 12-14 = 5.57); or Gender, *F* (1, 42) = 3.42, *p*> .05, ηp2= .08 (*M* males = 5.05; *M* females = 5.53) had a significant effect on level of synchrony and there were no significant interactions (all *p’s> .05*). In addition, there were no significant main effects or interactions for attention as measured by mutual eye gaze for either Rapport Type, *F* (1, 42) = 1.45, *p*> .05, ηp2 = .03 (*M* collaborative play *=* 62.36ms*;M* solitary play = 71.14ms); Age, *F* (2, 42) = 1.05, *p* > .05, ηp2= .05 (*M* 6-7 = 68.83ms; *M* 8-10 = 71.92; *M* 12-14 = 59.50ms); or Gender, *F* (1, 42) = .27, *p* > .05, ηp2= .01 (*M* males = 64.87ms; *M* females = 68.63ms).

**4.3.2 Information Elicited**

Rapport Type had a highly significant effect on total information elicited with participants giving more total information after the collaborative play condition than the solitary play condition, *F* (1, 42) = 8.14, *p* < .01, ηp2= .16. The effect of Age approached significance, *F* (2, 42) = 3.04, *p* = .059, ηp2= .13. Post hoc tests revealed 12-14 year olds gave significantly more information than 6-7 year olds *p* < .05. Finally, Gender approached significance, *F* (1, 42) = 3.74, *p* = .60, ηp2= .08, with females giving more total information than males. There were no significant interactions (all *p’s >*.05; see Table 4.2 for means and standard deviations).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 4.2**  ***Mean Total Units of Information Elicited Across Rapport Type, Age and Gender*** | | | | |
| **Rapport type** | **Age group and Gender** | | | **Total** |
|  | **6-7** | **8-10** | **12-14** |  |
| **Males** | | | | |
| **Collaborative play** | 120.25  (15.80) | 94.80  (27.23) | 142.60  (61.26) | 357.65  (104.29) |
| **Solitary play** | 54.00  (21.00) | 99.67  (23.03) | 115.00  (48.76) | 268.67  (92.79) |
| **Females** | | | | |
| **Collaborative play** | 129.25  (15.65) | 155.20  (51.82) | 128.75  (45.04) | 413.20  (112.51) |
| **Solitary play** | 90.80  (20.81) | 111.40  (32.58) | 127.75  (19.26) | 329.95  (72.65) |
| **Total** | 394.30  (73.26) | 461.07  (134.66) | 514.10  (174.32) | 1369.47  (382.24) |

***Note. Standard deviations for each score are in the brackets.***

Similarly, significantly more spontaneous information was elicited after the collaborative play condition than the solitary play condition, *F* (1, 42) = 9.4, *p* < .01, ηp2= .18. Gender also had a significant effect with females giving more spontaneous information than males, *F* (1, 42) = 4.94, *p* < .05, ηp2= .11. No significant effect was found for Age, *F* (2, 42) = 1.81, *p* > .05, ηp2 = .08 and there were no significant interactions across the different factors (all *p’s >*.05; see Table 4.3 for means and standard deviations).

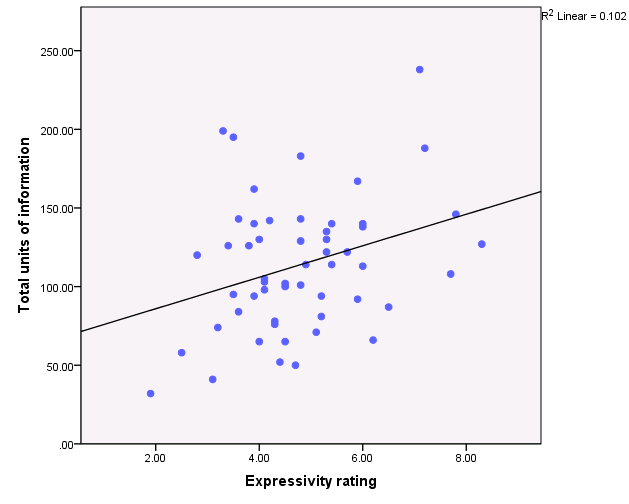
|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 4.3**  ***Mean Spontaneous Information Elicited Across Rapport Type, Age and Gender*** | | | | |
| **Rapport type** | **Age group and Gender** | | | **Total** |
|  | **6-7** | **8-10** | **12-14** |  |
| **Males** | | | | |
| **Collaborative play** | 113.75  (15.37) | 73.40  (23.34) | 115.80  (59.10) | 302.95  (97.81) |
| **Solitary play** | 37.00  (26.43) | 78.00  (27.87) | 88.80  (50.05) | 203.80  (104.35) |
| **Females** | | | | |
| **Collaborative play** | 117.00  (15.64) | 139.80  (61.25) | 114.00  (47.74) | 370.80  (124.63) |
| **Solitary play** | 70.00  (30.04) | 89.80  (27.69) | 116.50  (16.28) | 276.30  (74.01) |
| **Total** | 337.75  (87.48) | 381.00  (140.15) | 435.10  (173.17) | 1153.85  (400.80) |

***Note. Standard deviations for each score are in the brackets.***

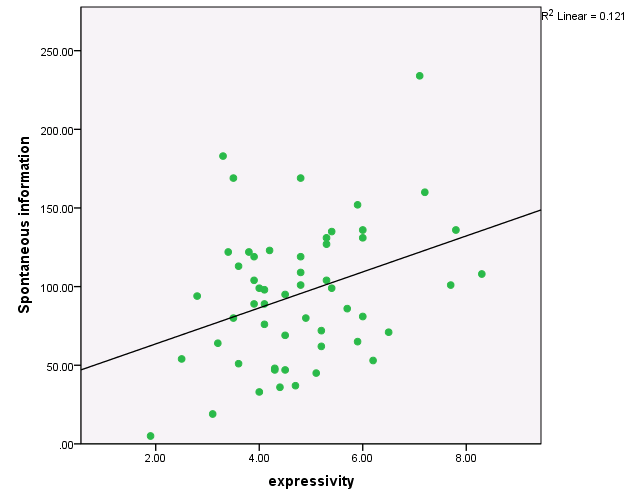
**4.3.3 Relationship between information elicited and expressivity**

There were significant positive correlations between total units of information and expressivity, *r* = .32, *N* = 54, *p* < .05, *r2* = 0.10; and between spontaneous information and expressivity, *r* = .33, *N* = 54, *p* < .01, *r2*= 0.11 (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

***Figure 4.1.*Relationship between spontaneous information and expressivity rating.**

****

***Figure 4.1 .* Relationship between total information and expressivity rating.**

****

***Figure 4.2.* Relationship between spontaneous information and expressivity rating.**

**4.3.4 Level of Enjoyment**

A three-way analysis of variance was carried out with Age (6-7, 8-10 and 12-14 years), Gender and Task Type (build, handicraft and jigsaw) as the independent measures variables. Age approached significance, *F* (2, 12) = 3.86, *p* = .051, ηp2 = .39. Post hoc tests revealed the 6-7 year olds (mean enjoyment rating (*M)* = 4.69) enjoyed themselves significantly more than the 12-14 year olds (*M* = 3.73), *p* < .05. No significant effect was found for Task Type, *F* (2, 12) = .07, *p* > .05, ηp2= .01 (*M* build = 4.13; *M* handicraft = 4.20; *M* jigsaw = 4.25); or Gender, *F* (1, 12) = 3.59, *p* > .05, ηp2= .23 (*M* males = 3.92; *M* females = 4.49).

**4.4 Discussion**

**4.4.1 Summary**

Overall, collaborative play was found to have communication benefits over solitary play; that is children regardless of age group gave more information and were more expressive after engaging in collaborative play with the adult. No differences were found for the other two rapport indicators or across the different constructive play tasks. A slight age effect was found for the collaborative play condition with the youngest age group enjoying the play interaction more than the 12-14 year olds.

**4.4.2 Communicative impact**

As predicted, the children gave more information after playing collaboratively with the adult as opposed to playing alone. This fits with previous research, and the findings of chapter 3, in that an attempt at rapport building with children improved communication as it can be used as a tool to facilitate information. The aim of this study was to test the possible communicative effects of using play to build rapport as a justification for its use in forensic interviews. Play as a mechanism for rapport building had never before been empirically investigated and the findings from this study show that it could be used in a rapport building situation to increase communication. In addition, these differences were maintained in the elicitation of spontaneous information. From a forensic perspective, evidence provided in this way tends to be viewed as more credible (e.g. Orbach et al., 2000). When producing this information children use more recall based strategies that draw on memories that are more readily available, and therefore may be more accurate (e.g. Dent & Stephenson, 1979). As such, collaborative play may be an effective means for improving not just the quantity, but also the quality of information.

**4.4.3 Impact on psychological rapport**

This study was the first of its kind to use Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal’s (1990) indicators of rapport with children. For the indicator of expressivity, differences were found across both conditions in that the children were more expressive after collaborative play than solitary play. This marker of rapport signals the levels of positivity in an interaction, as participants are thought to be less inhibited with their facial expressions and gestures because they are enjoying the interaction (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). In support of this, one of the aspects of the theory generated from chapter 3 was that engaging the child using something they are interested in may facilitate relationship development. Perhaps because the communication in rapport building was centred on a play task that was fun for the children, this then benefited the interaction. The conversation during collaborative play included a discussion of neutral topics, e.g. what the child had been doing in class, but it was mainly concentrated on a discussion of how to complete the task and what was involved. Perhaps this was the ‘little in’ that Gillian the social worker referred to in chapter 3 in that the task captured the child’s interest and motivated them to communicate about it. Consequently, the channels of communication were then open and this carried on during the post play conversation. Expressivity was found to have a positive relationship with total information and spontaneous information. It is possible therefore that these outcomes may have been the result of engaging the child’s interest during collaborative play.

**4.4.4 Possible psychological underpinnings of play rapport**

From a theoretical perspective why does collaborative play improve communication in comparison with solitary play? As the research investigating play rapport is still in its early stages it is difficult to determine the underlying psychological effects that account for the findings. A number of theoretical interpretations will be proposed throughout the thesis. These will be based on the literature outlined in the first two chapters and the theory generated from the practitioners in chapter 3. It should be emphasized however, that these are suggested interpretations at this point that have not yet been empirically investigated. The findings in subsequent chapters will address some of these explanations.

***Collaboration***

The more simple explanation is that the children have had the opportunity to interact with the adult, through play, prior to giving information. At this stage in the thesis benefits cannot be attributed to play per se as both conditions involved this activity (a comparison of play rapport with other rapport techniques is covered in chapters 5 and 6). Therefore, it is likely that it is the collaboration that improves the information output. This finding fits with previous research demonstrating the communicative advantages of social support (Carter et al., 1996; Davis & Bottoms, 2002a, b; Goodman et al., 1991). However, previous research found benefits in the accuracy of the information only. Children were resistant to post event misinformation as they were more likely to correct the adult when interviewed in a supportive manner (e.g. Carter et al., 1996). Therefore, early indications of the effectiveness of collaborative play rapport indicate that it may increase the detail in information also.

***Anxiety reduction***

As mentioned previously, anxiety reduction is one of the benefits of social support (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007), and the interviewers from the qualitative study in chapter 3 also believed that rapport building relaxes children and makes them feel more comfortable. In their study Barnett and Storm (1991) found that play can have a buffering effect when children encounter novel or distressing situations. As such, play may help reduce the anxiety that children experience in adult-child dyads, therefore facilitating the provision of information. However, in Barnett and Storm’s study the children engaged in play alone. If the benefit of play is entirely anxiety based, and is also successfully reduced in solitary play, then improvements in communication should have been found for both conditions in the present study. However, collaborative play with the adult seems to have provided an additional component that enabled the children to give more information during the communication. It may be that interacting with the adult while playing further reduces anxiety. Children may have anxieties about the situation, but also interpersonal ones regarding the adult (refer to section 3.3.5 on the effects of children’s pre-conceived ideas). Perhaps the interviewer is a source of anxiety for the child, and attempts to directly counteract this negative influence has a greater impact on the elicitation of information. Solitary play may reduce certain situational anxieties, but it takes collaborative play to further reduce the interpersonal ones. Measurement of the children’s anxiety levels across the different rapport protocols is required to investigate this theory further (this is carried out in chapter 6).

***Empowerment***

A further theoretical interpretation could be that children were more confident after collaborative play. Expressivity can be an indication that children are feeling more confident when communicating as these communicators tend to be more animated when speaking (e.g. Krauss, Chen & Chawla, 1996). This would support Davis and Bottom’s resistance efficacy theory (2002a, b) that children are empowered through social support and perceive themselves as effective communicators. The theory would go some way towards explaining the effect for spontaneous information, as children’s increased information accuracy may be a by-product of increased confidence (Davis & Bottoms, 2002a, b; Doherty-Sneddon & McAuley, 2000). Perhaps it is the collaboration on the play task that increases this. By collaborating with the interviewer during the task the child is contributing to its completion. This therefore balances the power dynamics, making the child more confident (hence the increased expressivity) which in turn facilitates their subsequent communication.

***Meta-linguistic awareness***

This interpretation also relates to the concept of meta-linguistic awareness outlined in chapter 1 (see section 1.2.3). Children are unaware of the necessity for elaborate responses in the forensic interview as this is in opposition to the communicative dynamic that they are used to experiencing with adults (e.g. Saywitz & Synder, 1996). Perhaps collaborative play scaffolds the structure of the interaction for the child and this carries forward to the communication in the post rapport interaction. This explanation relates to the category of ‘understanding’ found in chapter 3. The practitioners stated that the rapport phase could set the ‘tone’ for the remainder of the interview by increasing children’s understanding of the communication format required for the substantive phase. Manipulation of task contribution and its resultant impact upon communication would further validate this suggestion.

**4.4.5 Synchrony and attention**

Interestingly, no differences were found across conditions for the other two rapport indicators (synchrony and mutual eye contact). Although it is cited as a hallmark of rapport (Bernieri et al., 1996) synchrony is more likely to occur as a result of an established relationship (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). In later interactions participants are familiar with the other person and their style of communication. This facilitates the turn taking component of an interaction where individuals are used to each other’s communicative approach, and modify their own communication based on this information. Synchrony was included in the present study as an indicator of rapport, nevertheless our findings were consistent with the theory that synchrony is only useful for established relationships. Additionally, considering Bernieri’s (2005) statement about the importance of context when measuring rapport, the adult-child dyad may not be particularly synchronized even when the interaction is of a good quality. In the present study, and most certainly in a forensic context, the adult asks questions and the child provides the majority of the communication. Consequently, these interactions are not typically synchronized and this indicator may be redundant in this particular context.

Secondly, no differences were found for mutual eye contact. This was surprising as eye gaze is often cited as a cue to affiliation (Argyle, 1996). If the children felt more ‘connected’ with the adult after collaborating, then we should have seen a greater occurrence of mutual eye gaze in the collaborative play rapport condition as a result. Mutual eye contact however, was not cited as an indicator of rapport. This was something measured based on the theory that ‘attention’ is a principal component of rapport (Bernieri, 2005). It is possible that this is not a valid indicator which accounts for the null effect found in the present study. Nevertheless, differences were found for expressivity, and quantity and quality of information, and so it is important to note that the lack of mutual eye contact did not impact upon the interaction or the communicative outcome.

**4.4.6 Individual differences**

Minor age effects were found for the participants in this study. The 12-14 years olds gave significantly more information than the 6-7 year old age group. This was expected and matched typical age effects found in previous research (e.g. Dent & Stephenson, 1979). Significant changes in cognitive development can account for this finding. As mentioned in chapter 1use of recall and linguistic skills progress as children develop. As such, the younger age group would not be as effective at communicating as the older child participants. It was predicted that there would be changes across ascending age groups, but it seems the 8-10 year olds did not give significantly more information than the 6-7s, or less than the 12-14 year olds. However, the post play conversations lasted between 3-5 minutes. A longer interaction may have produced the predicted effects as older children tend to *exhaust* their recall capabilities to a greater extent than younger children. So if the conversation progressed, age differences may have emerged in the quantity of information produced.

Contrary to the theory from chapter 3 no differences emerged between the adolescents and the younger age groups in terms of the effectiveness of rapport building. No age effects were found across any of the three rapport indicators. However, the 12-14 year olds did enjoy the ‘play’ less than the 6-7 year olds. This could be explained with respect to the age effects touched on in chapter 3. The adolescents may enjoy a structured attempt at rapport building less, because they feel it is not necessary for communication, and may find it patronising (refer to chapter 3). Nevertheless, this does not seem to have impacted upon the quality of the interaction or the information produced. It is important to remember however, that the context of this study is entirely different to the forensic situation covered in chapter 3. Young people in forensic interviews are more often than not disclosing information of a sensitive nature and this may interact with the overall effectiveness of rapport building. Collaborative ‘play’ rapport would have to be tested in a field situation to further explore adolescents’ responsiveness to this rapport approach.

Gender differences emerged with girls being more expressive, and giving more information and spontaneous information than boys. Females in general have better interpersonal skills than their male counterparts (e.g. Dalton, 1983; Philippot & Feldman, 1990). In addition, girls are more proficient at language, during childhood, than boys (Zevenbergen & Ryan, 2010). As such, differences found across the variables are unsurprising. Furthermore, the experimenter was female and the girls may have been more responsive to a female communication/play partner than the boys were. These findings did not interact with condition or play task however, demonstrating that collaborative play rapport may be an effective rapport approach regardless of age or gender. Similarly, no differences were found across the different constructive play tasks, indicating that any of these forms of play could be used in subsequent research investigating collaborative play rapport’s effects in forensic interviews (see chapter 5).

**4.4.7 Methodological considerations**

One researcher was responsible for carrying out all of the rapport interactions. This is common however, in laboratory research concerning forensic interviews (e.g. Akehurst, Milne & Kohnken, 2003), and is often viewed as an advantage in relation to controlling interviewer variability (Dando, Wilcock & Milne, 2009). Future research should employ a number of male and female interviewers to ensure the generalisability of findings.

Further, it is important to keep in mind that the present study involved a brief communicative interaction between the experimenter and the children. This obviously falls short of the length of time normally required during forensic interviews. Nevertheless, the findings for collaborative play give an indication of its possible communicative impact during longer adult-child interactions. This will be further investigated in chapter 5 where collaborative play will be compared with other rapport protocols during full length mock forensic interviews with children, to assess its utility as an alternative method for establishing rapport with children in this setting.

Finally, this was the first empirical study to date that has used Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal’s (1990) rapport indicators with children. In chapter 2 concerns about the utility of some of these measures, founded in the context of forensic interviews, were highlighted. Based on our findings it is possible that synchrony is not a valid measure of rapport when the interaction involves an adult eliciting information from an unfamiliar child.

**4.4.8 Conclusions**

To conclude, the results of the present study provide an indication of the beneficial effects of a new collaborative play technique for building rapport between adults and children. The study showed that children who worked with an adult, to complete a play task, are more expressive and communicative in a subsequent interaction, than children who complete a play task alone. A variety of theoretical explanations have been proposed for these findings and subsequent research is required to provide a best fit. Optimum communication between interviewers and children is the primary goal of child investigative interviews, and our findings indicate collaborative play rapport may go some way towards achieving this effect. This thesis now moves on to consider the effects of the collaborative play rapport approach on children’s communication in the context of a mock forensic interview.

**Chapter Five**

**The Communicative Impact of Rapport Building Protocol in Mock Forensic Interviews with Children**

**5.1 Introduction**

Building on the findings from the previous two studies, this chapter will investigate the impact of the rapport building phase in mock child forensic interviews. In chapter 3 the practitioners stated that the rapport building phase is used as a tool to facilitate children’s communication. The current study will extend this theory by examining whether different rapport building protocols influence the quantity and quality of information children give during mock forensic interviews. Additionally, it will assess whether rapport building has any influence on the rapport levels between interviewer and child. These findings will give an indication of the communicative utility of the rapport building phase, and whether it improves the quality of the interviewer-child interaction.

The study will also provide the opportunity to develop the findings of chapter 4, by comparing collaborative play rapport with the current rapport approach used by child investigative interviewers in the UK (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). These two rapport methods will be compared to each other along with a control condition involving no rapport building at all. This will give an indication of whether these approaches influence communication and rapport, and which is the most effective at doing so.

**5.1.1 Rapport building in forensic interviews with adults**

According to Vanderhallen, Vervaeke and Holmberg (2011) socio-emotional issues, e.g. anxiety and reduced motivation, also exist in interviews with adult witnesses, and there is considerable emphasis on the importance of rapport building here too (Clarke & Milne, 2001; Gudjonsson, 2003; Kebbell, Milne & Wagstaff, 1999; Milne & Bull, 1999). They state that established rapport is similar to the working alliance that exists in therapeutic settings between therapists and patients (Vanderhallen et al., 2011). Consequently, they examined witness and suspect perceptions of the working alliance during forensic interviews as an indication of the level of rapport. They found a discrepancy between investigator and witness/suspect perceptions, suggesting that interviewers commonly misjudge the level of rapport in the interaction. In addition, when looking at interviewer behaviour, feelings of anxiety in the witness/suspect correlated with a dominant interview style, and interview style was consistently associated with the working alliance. These findings indicate that, similar to interviews with children, the behaviour of the interviewer is related to the witness and suspect’s assessment of the interview experience.

In terms of interview style, a humanitarian approach to interviewing is associated with more accurate information from adults (Holmberg, 2009). Humanitarian would involve more empathy and social support from the interviewer, and the approach has been described as accommodating, engaging and positive (Vanderhallen et al., 2011). As mentioned previously, the rapport phase is often associated with the initiation of these behaviours. In addition, failure to establish rapport also tends to affect the accuracy of evidence with adults, increasing their susceptibility to misinformation effects (Vallano et al., 2008). This finding corresponds with the child interview literature that reveals children are more resistant to misleading information when social support is given by the interviewer. Rapport building is an aspect of social support, and therefore it is not surprising that they both produce similar outcomes with adult witnesses.

Walsh and Bull (2010) also found that rapport building was an important component during interviews with adult suspects. In their investigation of the impact of the PEACE model on interview outcome, they found that building rapport was crucial for the quality of the ‘Engage and Explain’ phase. In this stage interviewers are instructed to inform the suspect of the legal requirements of the interview, and to build rapport. Their findings demonstrated that an attempt at rapport building in this stage was not just a ‘mechanical’ part of the interview, but could in fact have implications for the interview’s result.

Collins, Lincoln and Frank (2002) were some of the first researchers to investigate the effects of the rapport phase on eye witness recall with adults in an experimental setting. This is different to the previously described field research, as Collins et al. (2002) were able to control and manipulate rapport building, and examine its influence on communication with adults. Participants were assigned to either a rapport, neutral or abrupt condition. These differed in terms of the tone of voice, dialogue and body language of the interviewer, as well as the placement of furniture and use of props. For example, in the rapport phase condition the interviewer spoke in a gentler tone than the abrupt or neutral conditions. In the neutral manipulation the interviewer remained neutral across all behaviour channels. Finally, in the abrupt condition the interviewer spoke in a harsher tone and appeared uninterested in what the participant had to say. The results showed the participants recalled more correct information in the rapport phase condition than the neutral and abrupt conditions. This is consistent with the findings of Holmberg (2009) and Vallano et al. (2008) that an attempt at rapport building improves the accuracy of information from adult witnesses.

Nevertheless, despite the rapport phase’s significance, the extent to which rapport tends to be established in adult interviews has been found to range from 40% with witnesses, to 47% with suspects (Clarke & Milne, 2001). Interviewers report that they frequently have difficulty achieving this (Moston & Engleberg, 1993). Perhaps this is less surprising in interviews with alleged suspects where the interviewee may be less motivated to achieve a relationship with the interviewer. However, these statistics are of concern for interviews with witnesses, where the ‘working alliance’ should serve to benefit the interview outcome (e.g. Vanderhallen et al., 2011; Walsh & Bull, 2010). Overall, it seems rapport building is an aspect of the interview protocol with adults that should be further addressed by researchers and policy makers in order to improve its success. Interviewers need more guidance on how to establish rapport with adult interviewees which may in turn produce benefits in the elicitation of evidence.

**5.1.2 Rapport building in forensic interviews with children**

The majority of the literature has been covered in section 2.3.1, but will be addressed in further detail in this chapter. The rapport phase may be equally as important in forensic interviews with children. Children themselves have indicated why the rapport phase is of benefit. Westcott and Davies (1996) interviewed sexually abused children who had previously experienced these interviews. When asked what could be improved about the interviewing process, they said they would prefer ‘time to get to know’ the interviewers first ‘before they gradually got into it’ (Westcott & Davies, 1996, p. 466). These statements indicate that children feel they require extra time with the interviewer prior to discussion about the alleged issues. In addition, some children admitted they did not give a full account of events because they did not feel comfortable with the interviewer. These findings support the account given by the practitioners in chapter 3 that the rapport building phase facilitates communication with child witnesses. Self-report information from both interviewers and children therefore, suggests rapport building is a significant factor in motivating children to communicate. Whilst it is worthwhile to hear first-hand accounts of the interview experience, the statements generated in these studies have not been investigated in field or laboratory based research. Studies that involve the control and manipulation of the rapport phase are required to validate these statements.

Teoh and Lamb (2010) addressed this issue, to a certain extent, in their examination of the effects of the rapport building phase in real life child investigative interviews. They looked at the relationship between the content of the rapport phase, and information elicited in the main part of the interview from 75 interviews with child sexual abuse victims in Malaysia. They found a negative correlation between the number of rapport building prompts given by the interviewers in the rapport phase, and information in the interview. Generally, the more frequently the interviewers used rapport building prompts and spoke in this phase, the less informative 5-7 year olds were about the allegations in the substantive phase. The children were still responsive, but they tended to produce less forensically relevant information. Nevertheless, little detail is given in the article about the content and structure of the rapport phases included in these interviews. It states that “the interviewer asked questions or made comments about the child’s personal life, such as family, school and hobbies” (Teoh & Lamb, 2010, p. 158). Previous research indicates that children give more detailed and accurate accounts when exposed to open style prompts in the rapport phase as opposed to a direct style of communication (see chapter 2 section 2.3.1; Roberts et al, 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997). It could be that the interviewers used specific-closed and forced choice questions, when asking about the children’s personal lives, and this reduced their communication overall.

This highlights the issue that *how* the rapport phase is conducted is important for communication, and not just the *inclusion* of a rapport phase. As mentioned above, research has found information benefits, when children are questioned using an open style in comparison to a direct style of communication in the rapport phase (Roberts et al., 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997). These gains in the open rapport method are attributed to both cognitive and social factors (see chapter 2 section 2.3.1). Furthermore, Hershkowitz et al. (2006) found that the content of the rapport phase can influence not just information, but also disclosure rates from children in sexual abuse investigations also. In terms of pre-substantive question quality, disclosers were asked a greater number of free recall prompts than non-disclosers in the study, and were provided with more supportive utterances. Furthermore, disclosers were given fewer questions during this phase. This indicates that it is quality rather than quantity of interviewer input in the rapport phase which is important.

Teoh and Lamb (2010) commented that, similar to adult witnesses, it is sometimes difficult for interviewers to judge the rapport needs of different children. Interviewers need more explicit guidance on how to modify the rapport approach necessary for each individual child. In support of this, the findings from chapter 3 highlighted how individual differences in children guide the interviewer’s approach to rapport building, and often dictate the success of the rapport phase. The different permutations are not covered however in training and practice guidelines (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). Considering the self-report information presented by children and practitioners, and field and laboratory research from adult witnesses and suspects, it is time that the child investigative interviewing literature addressed rapport building protocol in greater detail.

A further criticism of the previous research is the definition of rapport. Many of the studies from the adult interview literature refer to rapport as established if an attempt at rapport building is carried out. They do not however, at any point measure the interview interactions with respect to the rapport indicators outlined in chapter 2 (Bernieri, 2005). We see no reason why Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal’s (1990) rapport framework could not be used in this setting to measure rapport. As mentioned in chapters 2 and 4, rapport can be measured by taking a self-report score from each member of an interaction. Alternatively, it can be assessed more objectively by measuring various behaviours when observing the interactions. The latter method is more suitable for children as the reliability of their self-reports is questioned (Hubbard et al., 2004). Indeed, measurement of the rapport behaviours was carried out successfully in the study from chapter 4. The utility of measuring synchrony with children was questioned in an interview context; however expressivity and mutual attention were quantified successfully.

**5.1.3 The purpose of the present study and specific predictions**

The purpose of the present study can be separated into two components. First of all, the new play rapport protocol investigated in chapter 4 was compared with the current rapport method used by practitioners in the UK (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). Although other rapport methods are available (e.g. practise interview protocol, NICHD see section 2.3.1) the UK based protocol was selected to better fit with the findings from the Scottish practitioners used in chapter 3. This involves questioning the child about neutral topics using primarily open prompts (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011).

The second aim of the study was to investigate the communicative impact of the inclusion of a rapport building phase in interviews with children. Much of the previous research has been based on self-report accounts (Chapter 3; Westcott & Davies, 1996), correlational studies between the pre-substantive and the substantive phase (Hershkowitz, 2009; Teoh & Lamb, 2010), or comparisons of the open style with a direct style of rapport building (Roberts et al., 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997). None of these investigations however, have used an experimental study with an appropriate control condition. As mentioned in chapter 2, the communicative advantages of the open style of rapport building may be attributable to the negative effects of the direct style when they are compared. This study therefore evaluated both of the rapport protocols (play and open) with a control condition involving no rapport building at all. This may better assess how the rapport phase overall, affects children’s communication and interpersonal rapport.

The different rapport approaches were compared across two different age groups, 5-7 and 8-10 year olds, to investigate how they impact upon the detail and accuracy of information provided in mock forensic interviews. The rapport levels were also compared to examine how each method affected interpersonal rapport between the adult and children. This is the first study to date that has looked at the specific rapport levels present in a child interview context, and whether or not rapport approach affected this variable. Similar to the study in chapter 4, the nonverbal rapport indicator of expressivity was used. Synchrony was not measured as this behaviour is typical of more established relationships in which participants are more familiar with each other (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990).

The children in the study participated in pirate activities with a research assistant. They were then interviewed by a different adult one week later to assess how much they could recall about the pirate event. Prior to the substantive phase children were assigned to one of the rapport approaches (no rapport, open rapport or play rapport). The interview structure followed the current approach used by UK practitioners (Home Office, 2011, for a summary see Appendix A).

The age groups involved were 5-7 and 8-10 year olds. Adolescents were not included as it was felt that play rapport was not suited to this age group. There were no detrimental effects found for collaborative play in chapter 4, nevertheless it was felt by the author that the tasks were not developmentally appropriate for this age group. Furthermore, the older children reported enjoying the play session less than the younger age groups which may support this decision. The difficulty is that the play tasks have to be age appropriate, but capable of completion within the 5-10 minute time period normally involved in the rapport phase (Davies et al., 2000). Tasks for adolescents may require a certain level of sophistication to capture their interest, and therefore may take a longer time to complete.

In the present study the age range of the youngest group was extended from 6-7 to 5-7 year olds. Younger children aged 3-5 tend to provide less detailed and accurate information in interview contexts due to their cognitive and linguistic limitations (Lamb et al., 2011). There is therefore considerable scope within this age group for improvement with regards to their communication. The concern with involving pre-schoolers however is that we may find floor effects when testing play rapport for the first time in mock forensic interviews. Children in this age group tend to provide very little information due to cognitive limitations (Doherty-Sneddon, 2003). Five year olds were therefore included in the youngest age group as they have sufficient cognitive and social abilities to be able to complete a mock forensic interview, but whose communication could still potentially benefit from the rapport protocol (Hershkowitz, 2009).

Given the previous findings relating to the communicative benefits of rapport building in chapter 4, and the adult and child literature, it is predicted that both open and play rapport will lead to more detailed and accurate information from the children in this study than those in the control condition. These effects tend to be found for information throughout the interview, the free narrative phase and in response to open questions (Roberts et al., 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997). Children are also expected to be more resistant to misleading questions after both protocols, as studies indicate social support increases children’s resistance to post event misinformation (e.g. Carter et al., 1996). Three misleading questions will be incorporated into to each interview in order to examine this. The rapport levels should also be greater in conditions involving a specific rapport approach in comparison with the control condition (see chapter 4). In the present study some non-verbal cues of affiliation were also measured, and it is expected that the findings will be the same as those measured by the rapport indicators. These cues have not been theoretically implicated in rapport research (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990), but have been used in previous studies to indicate how comfortable children were when interacting with an adult (e.g. smiling, Doherty-Sneddon & MacAuley, 2000; Doherty-Sneddon, 2003).

It is slightly more difficult to separate the effects of open and play rapport. Both have been found to have information benefits for children (Roberts et al., 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997), but only play rapport has been directly tested and shown to improve communication in comparison with an appropriate control condition (see chapter 4). This part of the study therefore is exploratory, and we offer no hypothesis for the expected differences between the two rapport protocols.

In keeping with the individual differences found in chapter 4 and previous research, it is expected that the 8-10 year olds will give more detailed and accurate information, and will be more resistant to misleading questions than the 5-7 year old age group (Lamb et al., 2011). We also predict a gender effect with females giving more detailed and accurate information, and producing greater rapport levels than male participants (chapter 4; Dalton, 1993).

**5.2 Method**

**5.2.1 Participants**

The study involved 112 school children from six different schools in Scotland. Data from 18 of the children were not included in analysis due to technical problems with the video equipment used to record the interviews. This left a final sample of 94 children from two different age groups (**5-7 year olds**, *n* = 47, *M* = 79.91 months, *SD* = 7.55; and **8-10 year olds**, *n* = 47, *M* = 115.56 months, *SD* = 8.41). There were 46 males (**5-7 year olds**; *n* = 25; and **8-10 year olds**, *n* = 21) and 47 females (**5-7 year olds**, *n* = 22; and **8-10 year olds**, *n* = 25). The children were given a certificate in return for participation. Parental and child consent was given prior to participation.

Sixteen undergraduate students from the School of Social Sciences and Law at Teesside University rated the video clips of the children to measure the rapport indicators as recommended by Bernieri (2005). All raters were female as previous research has demonstrated females to be more accurate assessors of non-verbal information and communication (Grahe & Bernieri, 1999). Mean age was 27 years with a range of 18 to 51. Both children and adults were naive to the experimental aims and hypotheses.

**5.2.2 Materials**

***Event items***

The ‘pirate event’ was based on a procedure similar to that described by La Rooy, Pipe and Murray (2007), and took place in an empty classroom of the child’s school. It comprised six different scenes with several activities in each. To create the pirate setting a large wooden cut out of a pirate (110cm wide and 220cm high) and a pirate ship (180cm wide and 120cm high) were placed at the scene. A net was thrown over the boat with gold coins arranged around the area. A desk covered by a pirate table cloth was at the centre of the scene for the child to sit at whilst they carried out some of the pirate activities. Thirty-six items were used in the six scenes as follows: in Scene 1 the child first met the pirate who was wearing brown boots, black trousers, a white top, a brown waistcoat, a black eye patch, a gold hoop earring, a red head scarf and a brown hat. This scene also involved a laptop, bio pack, electrodes and two wires. Scene 2 involved drums, drum sticks, a pirate waistcoat, a pirate notebook and a skeleton pencil; Scene 3 involved the table covered with the pirate table cloth, a treasure map to colour, felt tip pens and a magic box; Scene 4 involved a scroll with a pirate poem printed on it, a toy parrot, seeds, a seed scoop and a telescope; Scene 5 involved the magic box, a real treasure map, the cardboard pirate and ship, the parrot, a barrel filled with polystyrene chips, a treasure chest filled with gold coins and jewellery, and a pirate certificate; and Scene 6 involved the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (Spielberger et al., 1973).

***Rapport phase items***

After a delay of one week, all of the children were interviewed about the pirate event and took part in one of three different rapport building protocols prior to the interview. Participation in this phase took place in an empty classroom in the child’s school. The constructive play tasks used in the play rapport condition were the same tasks used in the study from chapter 4 (see section 4.2.2). A colouring in book and pens were used in the control condition.

***Interview phase items***

Each interview session was video recorded with a SONY DCR-DVD306E camcorder. A lap top, bio pack, electrodes and wires were also used to record the children’s heart rate throughout the interview. The State Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAI-C, Spielberger et al., 1973) was once again used to record the children’s perceived State Anxiety. Finally, the children were given a thank you certificate for participation in the interview. The information collected from the bio pack and STAI-C were part of the event to be recalled for this study, but the data relating to this is treated as a separate investigation and is covered in the study in chapter 6.

**5.2.3 Design and procedure**

The study was a 3 (Rapport type: play *vs.* open *vs.* control) x 2 (Gender: male *vs.* female) x 2 (Age Group: 5-7 *vs.* 8-10) independent measures design. Children were randomly assigned to the Rapport Type condition. Each child was seen individually by a research assistant and the experimenter.

***Pirate event***

Four female research assistants played the part of the pirate. The pirate event followed a script of activities in order that each child was exposed to exactly the same procedure. The event was not recorded for practical reasons but the research assistants were asked to note anything that deviated from the script in case the child recalled this during the interview. Overall nothing random was reported by any of the research assistants. The pirate collected the child from their classroom and took them to an empty classroom in the child’s school. The pirate told the child that she was the Captain of the pirate ship and she wanted the child to participate in some pirate activities to see if they could sail the seven seas. They were told that first of all the Captain would check to see if the child had the heart of a pirate. This was carried out on a laptop and bio pack. A data file was created for the child on the computer and an electrode was attached onto each of the child’s wrists. The wires connected to the bio pack were then attached to the electrodes on the child’s wrists. The child was asked to take a deep breath until they heard the bio pack bleep and then to breathe out hard. This was to calibrate their heart rate. The child’s heart rate was then recorded for three minutes and the pirate chatted to the child about neutral topics during this time. Once the recording was finished the pirate checked the screen and told the child that they did have the heart of a pirate, and could continue on with the remainder of the activities. The electrodes and wires were then removed from the child’s wrists.

In Scene 2 the child was asked to beat the drum with the sticks and sing a pirate song with the pirate. They then put on the pirate waistcoat and wrote their name in the pirate note book. In Scene 3 the child sat down at the table with the pirate. They both then coloured in the treasure map with the pens, and placed the map in the magic box. The child was told that the magic box would turn the coloured map into a real treasure map that they could use to find the hidden treasure. The pirate then put the box under the table. In Scene 4 the child read a pirate poem from a scroll and then fed the parrot the seed using the seed scoop. The pirate then asked the child to use the telescope to look around the classroom for 5 interesting things and to report back to the pirate. Whilst the child was doing this the pirate went back to the magic box and swapped the map they had coloured in for a real treasure map. This was to create the impression that the magic box had turned the child’s coloured map into the real treasure map.

In Scene 5 the pirate and child looked back in the magic box to see if it had turned into a real treasure map. They then used the new map to find the barrel with the treasure chest in it. The map matched the layout of the room so that the child could easily use it to follow the trail to the treasure. The child then dug into the barrel filled with the polystyrene chips and found the treasure chest. Inside the chest were gold coins and jewellery, as well as a pirate certificate that stated the child was now a pirate and was fit to sail the seven seas. The child was told by the pirate not to tell anyone about the activities they had done that day and that they must keep it a secret. This was to make the child more reticent during the interview a week later. Finally, in Scene 6 the child filled out the state version of the STAI-C with the help of the pirate and was then taken back to their classroom. The entire event lasted no longer than 15 minutes.

***Rapport phase***

One week later the children were randomly assigned to one of the rapport conditions. They were collected from their classroom by the experimenter and taken to an empty classroom for their interview. They were told they were going to be asked about the pirate activities they had carried out in the previous week, but first they and the interviewer were going to spend a little time getting to know each other better. In the play condition the child and interviewer completed one of the play tasks together and the child was given the choice as to which play task they wanted to do. This was to ensure they were selecting a task that they were motivated to complete. They were told it wasn’t a test, that they had to work together and that the child could instruct the interviewer about what to do. The instructions given with the task were used to guide completion. The majority of the conversation centred on how to complete the task. In addition, the experimenter provided verbal feedback cues about the task, and encouraged conversation with the child by occasionally asking about neutral topics e.g. what they were doing in class etc.

In the open rapport condition the interviewer asked the child about neutral topics, e.g. what they had been doing in classroom, their school friends, hobbies etc. This is the rapport protocol used by UK practitioners based on guidance from the ‘Achieving Best Evidence’ document issued by the Home Office (2011). The interviewer adhered to the use of open questions to ask about the neutral topics with minimal use of specific-closed questions. Finally, in the control condition the child was asked to colour in a picture from a colouring book whilst the interviewer pretended to carry on with her own work. All of the rapport sessions lasted roughly between 5 to 8 minutes.

***Interview phase***

Directly after the rapport building phase the children were interviewed about the pirate event. At the beginning of the interview the children were once again connected to the bio pack for their heart rate to be measured throughout the interview (this will be covered in more detail in chapter 6). As the pirate event followed a script the interviewer had this information with them during the interview. Each child was questioned until they had given as much information from the script as possible. The funnel approach to interviewing outlined in section 1.2.1 (see Appendix A) was used to achieve this. Each child’s interview was similar in format and was based on the interview structure set out in the ‘Achieving Best Evidence Guidelines’ used by child interview practitioners in the UK (Home Office, 2011). The interview had four different phases: establishing rapport, free narrative recall, questioning and closure. The questioning style was naturalistic, and was not scripted, in order that the pattern of questioning used to elicit the information was in direct response to the replies given by the children. With the rapport phase already covered the children then experienced the final three components. In the free narrative phase each child was exposed to the same opening statement, ‘please tell me everything that you can remember about the pirate event last week from the very beginning to the very end’. Verbal (e.g. ‘uh-huh’) and non-verbal (e.g. head nods) facilitators were used to keep the child’s narrative going. Once the child had exhausted their free narrative recall they were asked to elaborate on the information they had already provided through the use of open ended questioning, e.g. ‘you said that you looked for the treasure, tell me more about that…’. If some of the information about the pirate event had still not been recalled then specific-closed questions were used to elicit more details about the information already given, e.g. if the child mentioned putting on a waistcoat then they would be asked, ‘what colour was the waistcoat that you put on?’ Sometimes this would prompt the child’s memory and they would give further detailed information. If this occurred then they were asked an open ended question about the new information to return the questioning to a more open style. Forced choice questions were used as a last resort if detailed information had not been given by the child, e.g. ‘did you feed the parrot seeds or an apple?’ However, these were used sparingly as they provide the opportunity for children to guess the answers and may decrease the accuracy of the information (Lamb et al., 2011).

Finally, throughout the course of the interview the children were exposed to three misleading questions to assess their resistance to suggestibility, e.g. when mentioning what the pirate was wearing the interviewer may ask ‘the top the pirate was wearing was blue wasn’t it?’ The correct answer is that the top was white. In the final stage of the interview the interviewer summarised the information given by the child, and asked the child if they could remember anything else. Finally, after the interview the child was once again asked to fill out the State component of the STAI-C. They were then given a thank you certificate and taken back to class. The mean length of the interviews was 10 minutes 21 seconds (range 4 minutes to 14 minutes). Each interview was video recorded with a SONY DCR-DVD306E camcorder.

**5.2.4 Coding**

The interviews were coded to assess three different aspects of communication: verbal information, non-verbal behaviour and rapport level.

***Verbal information***

The interviews were coded for the richness (number of details) of the children’s responses and the accuracy of the information provided.

***Richness of the reports.*** The interviews were coded for the number of details reported in response to the free narrative phase and each of the different question types (open, specific-closed and forced choice questions). Each utterance was broken down into subject, verb, object and other event relevant details. For example, the utterance ‘I banged the drums’ would be coded as three details for *I, banged* and *drums* (Roberts et al., 2004)*.*  Information given by the child that was not related to the pirate event was not coded.

***Accuracy of the reports.*** As the pirate event was scripted and the research assistants were asked to note any event that deviated from the script, the accuracy of the details given in response to the free narrative phase and each of the different question types could be assessed. The details were coded if they referred to the pirate event, if it was the first time they were mentioned, and if the accuracy of the information could be confirmed. Each piece of information was coded as ‘accurate’ if it had happened during the pirate event, ‘inaccurate’ if a detail was distorted, or an ‘intrusion’ if a detail that was not present in the event was reported by the child. For example, the utterance ‘*I wore a brown waistcoat’* would be coded as three accurate details for *I, wore* and *waistcoat* and one inaccurate for *brown* as the waistcoat was actually black. The utterance *‘we drew a picture’* would be coded as three intrusions for *we, drew* and *picture* because this event did not occur (Roberts et al., 2004).

For misleading questions, the number of correct responses was counted. For example, if the child was asked *‘the pirate wore a blue top didn’t she?’* and the child said this was incorrect or that they couldn’t remember, then this was coded as a correct response. It was coded as incorrect if the child agreed with the question.

***Non-verbal behaviour***

Three nonverbal behaviours were coded from the video clips of the interviews. The duration of the behaviours were recorded in milliseconds using a stop watch. As each interview varied in length the durations were changed to a percentage of the entire interview time. The behaviours coded were as follows: percentage of time the child spent in mutual eye contact with the interviewer, percentage of time the child spent smiling, and the number of times the child touched their head or body (also referred to as adaptors that are typically used as self-comforting behaviours, Campbell & Rapee, 1996; Doherty-Sneddon, 2003).

***Rapport behaviour***

Expressivity was rated by the adult student raters from Teesside University using thirty second clips extracted from the beginning of each interview (from 1-9, Bernieri et al., 1996). Previous research indicates that clips as short as 10 seconds produce reliable ratings of non-verbal behaviour (Bernieri, 2005). All clips were viewed on silent mode as research has found this to be the most effective method for observation of non-verbal cues (Grahe& Bernieri, 1999). The video clips were assessed using the computer program E-Prime (version 2). All raters viewed this on a computer in an experiment cubicle at the University. They viewed half of the clips one day and the other half 24 hours later. This was to reduce the effects of fatigue on rapport assessment. The order in which the two sets of clips were viewed was counterbalanced across raters, and within each set the order was randomised. Each rater saw the clip twice and was then instructed to rate on a scale from 1-9 how expressive the child was (Grahe & Bernieri, 1999). A definition of expressivity was given prior to starting and on screen along with the instructions.

***Inter-rater agreement***

An independent rater coded 20% of the video clips for several of the verbal and non-verbal measures. The scores for were as follows: free narrative information (81%), total accurate information given in response to open questions (90%), total incorrect information (85%), total number of intrusions (81%), percentage of time spent in mutual eye gaze (75%), percentage of time spent smiling (79%) and number of adaptors (85%). The same judge also counted a number of the experimenter’s non-verbal behaviours from 10 clips from each of the three rapport conditions, to ensure the experimenter displayed consistent behaviour across the rapport types. The behaviours coded were: number of head nods, smiling duration (ms), number of verbal facilitators (e.g. ‘uh-huh’), and time spent looking at the child (ms). No differences were found across the three conditions, all *p’s* > .05. The student participants rating the video clips also rated interviewer expressivity and no difference was found across conditions, *F* (2, 93) = 1.39, *p = .*254. These findings therefore indicate that any differences found across rapport type are not due to interviewer behaviour.

**5.3 Results**

For the purposes of data presentation the findings are separated into three different sections to represent a distinct aspect of the children’s interaction with the interviewer: the children’s verbal information, their non-verbal behaviour and the level of interpersonal rapport between the interviewer and the children. These aspects were measured by several dependent variables. Between-subjects multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) were used to examine the effects of each of the factors (Rapport type, Gender and Age group) on the multiple dependent variables. Whenever there were significant multivariate main effects or interactions, follow-up univariate analyses (ANOVAs) were conducted for each dependent variable separately. When these ANOVAs revealed significant interactions among two or more of the independent variables, simple effects analyses were conducted for different levels of one independent variable separately. For example an Age group x Rapport type interaction for total units of information, would be broken down into analyses looking at the total information given by the children in the different age groups looking at each of the rapport conditions separately.

**5.3.1 Verbal information**

This section is further sub-divided into: the richness of information provided, the accuracy of the information, the inaccuracy of the information and the number of intrusions (e.g. Roberts et al., 2004).

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 5.1**  **Total Amount of Information and Information Given in the Free Narrative Phase Following the Different Rapport Protocols and Across Age Groups** | | | |
|  | **5-7** | **8-10** | **Total** |
| **Total Information** | | | |
| **Play** | 143.40  (38.25) | 210.18  (52.00) | 353.58  (90.25) |
| **Open** | 127.56  (48.17) | 193.33  (42.02) | 320.89  (90.19) |
| **Control** | 145.06  (30.67) | 158.07  (47.46) | 303.13  (78.13) |
| **Total** | 416.02  (117.09) | 561.58  (141.48) | 977.60  (258.57) |
| **Free Narrative Information** | | | |
| **Play** | 30.20  (18.08) | 59.24  (21.14) | 89.44  (39.22) |
| **Open** | 30.13  (19.90) | 48.80  (19.18) | 78.93  (39.08) |
| **Control** | 33.44  (13.56) | 35.36  (17.91) | 69.00  (31.47) |
| **Total** | 93.77  (51.54) | 143.40  (58.23) | 237.37  (109.77) |

***Note. Standard deviations for each score are in the brackets.***

***Richness of reports***

To investigate whether Rapport type, or the Age and Gender of the children affected the total units of information given throughout the entire interview, and in the free narrative phase, a 3 (Rapport type) x 2 (Age group) x 2 (Gender) MANOVA was performed. Age group was highly significant, *F* (2, 80) = 17.67, *p* < .001, ηp2 = .31. Subsequent univariate analyses revealed highly significant differences in the total units of information given, with 8-10 year olds (*M* = 188.25) providing more detail than 5-7 year olds (*M* = 139.93) throughout the entire interview. There was also a highly significant effect of information provided in the free narrative phase, *F* (1, 81) = 18.23, *p* < .001, ηp2= .18. The 8-10 year olds once again provided greater detail (*M* = 47.22) than the 5-7 year olds (*M* = 31.72). The MANOVA also revealed a highly significant effect of Gender, *F* (2, 80) = 8.43, *p* < .001, ηp2 = .17. Univariate analyses showed females (*M* = 176.26) gave more information throughout the entire interview than males (*M* = 151.92), *F* (1, 81) = 7.56, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .09. Females (*M* = 46.5) also gave more information in the free narrative phase than male participants (*M* = 32.44), *F* (1, 81) = 15, *p* < .001, ηp2 = .16. The MANOVA showed no overall significant effect for Rapport type, *F* (3, 162) = 1.62, *p* = .17, ηp2 = .04.

There was a significant Age group by Rapport type interaction, *F* (4, 162) = 3, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .07. Univariate analyses revealed this occurred for both total units of information throughout the entire interview, *F* (2, 81) = 3.38, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .08, and information given in response to the free narrative phase, *F* (2, 81) = 4.82, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .12. During simple effects analyses the data was split across the rapport conditions, and an independent measures t-test for Age group revealed that 8-10 year olds gave significantly more information in total (*M* = 210.18) in the Play condition than the 5-7 year olds (*M* = 143.4), *t* (30) = 4.09, *p* < .001. The same effect was found for the Open rapport condition, *t* (29) = 4.04, *p* < .001 (8-10 *M* = 193.33; 5-7 *M* = 127.56). There was no effect of Age group for the Control condition, *t* (29) = .91, *p =* .34.

Following on from this, the data was then separated according to Age group and a one-way independent measures ANOVA revealed a significant effect of Rapport type for the 8-10 year olds’ total units of information, *F* (2, 44) = 4.91, *p* < .05, ηp2= .18. Tukey’s post hoc tests revealed older children in the Play condition (*M* = 210.18) gave more information than the children in the Control condition (*M* = 158.07), *p* < .05. No significant difference was found between the play and the open style of rapport (*M* = 193.33) *p* = .58. Finally, no difference was found between the open style and the control condition *p* = .12.

The same effect was found for information given in the free narrative phase when data was split according to Age group, *F* (2, 43) = 5.72, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .21. Tukey’s post hoc tests showed 8-10 year old children in the Play condition (*M* = 59.24) gave more detail than 8-10 year old children in the Control condition (*M* = 35.36), *p* < .05. No significant differences were found between Play and Open (*M* = 48.80) *p* = .30, or Open and Control *p* = .17.

The free narrative data was then split according to Rapport type and a significant effect was found for Age group in the Play condition, *t* (30) = 4.15, *p* < .001, with 8-10 year olds (*M* = 59.24) giving more free narrative information than the 5-7 year olds (*M* = 30.20). 8-10 year olds (*M* = 48.80) also gave significantly more free narrative information in the Open condition than the 5-7 year olds (*M* = 30.13), *t* (29) = 2.66, *p* < .05. Finally no significant Age effect was found for the Control condition, *t* (28) = .33, *p* = .74 (8-10 *M* = 33.36; 5-7 *M* = 33.44). No significant effects were found across Rapport type for the 5-7 year old age group for total units of information, *F* (2, 44) = .94, *p* = .4, ηp2= .04; or units of information in the free narrative phase, *F* (2, 44) = .19, *p* = .83, ηp2= .01. There were no other significant interactions (all *p’s* > .05). For the means and standard deviations for the different age groups and rapport types please refer to Table 5.1 below.

***Accuracy of reports***

A second MANOVA was carried out with the same independent variables as before (Age group, Gender & Rapport type) with total accurate units of information given, and accurate information produced in the free narrative phase as the dependent variables.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 5.2**  **Accurate Units of Information Given in the Free Narrative Phase Following the Different Rapport Protocols and Across Age Groups** | | | |
|  | **5-7** | **8-10** | **Total** |
| **Play** | 28.60  (17.70) | 51.06  (16.51) | 79.66  (34.21) |
| **Open** | 28.50  (20.14) | 47.60  (18.98) | 76.10  (39.12) |
| **Control** | 32.06  (13.83) | 33.50  (17.23) | 65.56  (31.06) |
| **Total** | 89.16  (51.67) | 132.16  (52.72) | 221.32  (104.39) |

***Note. Standard deviations for each score are in the brackets.***

The MANOVA revealed a highly significant effect of Age group, *F* (2, 80) = 22.96, *p* < .001, ηp2 = .37. Subsequent univariate analyses revealed 8-10 year olds (*M* = 173.22) gave significantly more accurate information in total than the 5-7 year old age group (*M* = 114.98), *F* (1, 81) = 46.33, *p* < .001, ηp2 = .36. Additionally, the 8-10 year olds (*M* = 43.52) gave more accurate information in the free narrative phase, than the 5-7 year olds (*M* = 30.13), *F* (1, 81) = 15.36, *p* < .001, ηp2 = .36. Once again Gender was significant, *F* (2, 80) = 6.32, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .14. The univariate analyses revealed females (*M* = 154.94) gave significantly more accurate information than males (*M* = 133.27), *F* (1, 81) = 6.41, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .07. Females (*M* = 42.77) also gave more accurate information in the free narrative phase than male participants (*M* = 30.88), *F* (1, 81) = 6.41, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .13. There was no overall significant effect of Rapport type, *F* (4, 162) = 1.24, *p* = .3, ηp2 = .03.

The univariate analysis once again revealed a significant interaction between Age group and Rapport type for accurate information given in the free narrative phase, *F* (2, 81) = 3.51, *p*< .05, ηp2= .08. During simple effects analyses the data was split across the rapport conditions, and an independent measures t-test for Age group revealed that 8-10 year olds gave significantly more accurate information in the free narrative phase (*M* = 51.06) in the Play condition than the 5-7 year olds (*M* = 28.60), *t* (30) = 3.71, *p* < .05. The same effect was found for the Open rapport condition, *t* (29) = 2.71, *p* < .05 (8-10 *M* = 47.60; 5-7 *M* = 28.50). There was no effect of Age group for the Control condition, *t* (28) = .25, *p =* .80.

The data was then separated according to Age group and a one-way independent measures ANOVA revealed a significant effect of Rapport type for the 8-10 year olds’ accurate information in the free narrative phase, *F* (2, 43) = 4.16, *p* < .05, ηp2= .16. Tukey’s post hoc tests revealed older children in the Play condition (*M* = 51.06) gave more information than the children in the Control condition (*M* = 33.50), *p* < .05. No differences were found between Play and Open (*M* = 47.60) *p* = .84; or Open and Control (*M* = 33.50) *p* = .09. No significant effects were found across Rapport type for the 5-7 year old age group for accurate information in the free narrative phase, *F* (2, 44) = .22, *p* = .81, ηp2= .01. There were no other significant interactions (all *p’s* > .05). Please refer to Table 5.2 for means and standard deviations for the different age groups and rapport types.

A third MANOVA was conducted looking at the effects of the independent variables on the number of total inaccuracies provided by the children and inaccuracies given in response to the free narrative phase. There were no main effects for Age group *F* (2, 80) = 1.62, *p* = .21, ηp2 = .04; Gender *F* (2, 80) = .12, *p* = .89, ηp2 = .003; or Rapport type *F* (4, 162) = .92, *p* = .45, ηp2 = .02. The MANOVA revealed no significant interactions (all *p’s* > .05, please refer to table 9.1 for means and standard deviations).

**Table 5.3**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Total Inaccurate Units of Information and Inaccurate Information Given in the Free Narrative Phase Following the Different Rapport Protocols and Across Age Groups** | | | |
|  | **5-7** | **8-10** | **Total** |
| **Total Inaccurate Information** | | | |
| **Play** | 7.33 (6.86) | 15.76 (15.38) | 23.09 (22.24) |
| **Open** | 9.56 (7.28) | 10.73 (7.96) | 20.29 (15.24) |
| **Control** | 8.94 (4.77) | 7.33 (6.48) | 16.27 (11.25) |
| **Total** | 25.83 (18.91) | 33.82 (29.82) | 59.65 (48.73) |
| **Free Narrative Inaccurate Information** | | | |
| **Play** | 0.13 (0.35) | 2.18 (4.08) | 2.31 (4.43) |
| **Open** | 0.94 (1.88) | 0.93 (2.63) | 1.87 (4.51) |
| **Control** | 0.81 (1.38) | 1.50 (3.37) | 2.31 (4.75) |
| **Total** | 1.88 (3.61) | 4.61 (10.08) | 6.49 (13.69) |

***Note. Standard deviations for each score are in the brackets.***

The final MANOVA carried out for accuracy looked at the impact of the different factors (Age group, Gender & Rapport type) on the total number of intrusions given by the children, and the number of intrusions elicited in the free narrative phase. The MANOVA revealed a highly significant main effect of Age group *F* (2, 80) = 9.28, *p* < .001, ηp2 = .19. Subsequent univariate analyses revealed 5-7 year olds (*M* = 8.68) gave significantly more intrusions than the 8-10 year olds (*M* = 2.83), *F* (1, 81) = 18.37, *p* < .001, ηp2 = .19. There were no significant main effects for Gender *F* (2, 162) = 1.84, *p* = .12, ηp2 = .04; or Rapport type F (4, 162) = 1.84, p = .12, ηp2= .04. There were no significant interactions (all *p’s*> .05; refer to Table 10.1 for means and standard deviations).

**Table 5.4**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Total Intrusions and Intrusions Given in the Free Narrative Phase Following the Different Rapport Protocols and Across Age Groups** | | | |
|  | **5-7** | **8-10** | **Total** |
| **Total Intrusions** | | |  |
| **Play** | 10.07 (7.24) | 2.35 (4.47) | 12.42 (11.71) |
| **Open** | 10.13 (10.70) | 3.60 (4.44) | 13.73 (15.14) |
| **Control** | 5.44 (6.44) | 2.07 (2.25) | 7.51 (8.69) |
| **Total** | 25.64 (24.38) | 8.02 (11.16) | 33.66 (35.54) |
| **Free Narrative Intrusions** | | |  |
| **Play** | 1.60 (2.77) | 0.41 (1.70) | 2.01 (4.47) |
| **Open** | 0.56 (1.79) | 0.33 (1.29) | 0.89 (3.08) |
| **Control** | 0.19 (0.75) | 0.36 (0.93) | 0.55 (1.68) |
| **Total** | 2.35 (5.31) | 1.10 (3.92) | 3.45 (9.23) |

***Note. Standard deviations for each score are in the brackets.***

***Questioning phase***

The richness and accuracy of the children’s responses were then analysed again with respect to the questioning phase of the interview, considering children’s responses to each question type in turn (open, specific-closed and forced choice questions). The number of accurate responses to misleading questions was also included in the accuracy MANOVA for the different question types. This was to give an indication of the effects of the factors on children’s suggestibility.

The first MANOVA was carried out looking at the effects of Age group, Gender and Rapport type on the detail of information given in response to open questions, specific non-leading questions and closed questions. The MANOVA revealed a significant effect for Age group *F* (2, 80) = 11.75, *p* < .001, ηp2 = .31. Subsequent univariate analyses showed a significant effect for the detail of information given in response to open questions, *F* (1, 82) = 34.99, *p* < .001, ηp2 = .30. The 8-10 year olds (*M* = 67.91) gave more information than the 5-7 year olds (*M* = 40.09). The MANOVA revealed no main effect of Gender, *F* (2, 80) = .79, *p*= .5, ηp2 = .03; or Rapport type *F* (4, 162) = 1.18, *p* = .32, ηp2 = .04. There were no significant interactions (all *p’s* > .05).

A second MANOVA looked at the influence of these factors on the accuracy of information given in response to open, specific-closed and forced choice questions. It also included the number of accurate responses given in answer to misleading questions. The MANOVA showed a significant effect of Age group, *F* (2, 79) = 12.4, *p* <.001, ηp2 = .39. Univariate analyses revealed 8-10 year olds (*M* = 64.28) gave more accurate information in response to open questions than 5-7 year olds (*M* = 35.88), *F* (1, 82) 42.22, *p* < .001, ηp2 = .34. The 8-10 year olds (*M* = 2.4) also gave more accurate responses to the misleading questions than the 5-7 year olds (*M* = 1.9), *F* (1, 82) = 10.7, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .12. There was also a significant effect of Rapport type, *F* (8, 160) = 2.02, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .09. Univariate analyses revealed Rapport type was significant for accurate responses to misleading questions, *F* (2, 82) = 6.05, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .13. Tukey’s post hoc tests showed children in the Play condition (*M* = 2.46) gave more accurate responses to misleading questions than children in the Open condition (*M* = 1.80) *p* < .05. There were no significant differences found between the Open and Control conditions (*M* = 2.20) *p* = .11; or the Play and Control conditions *p* = .32. (Please refer to Figure 5.1). The MANOVA revealed no overall significant main effect for Gender, *F* (2, 79) = .73, *p* = .58, ηp2 = .04. There were no significant interactions (all *p’s* > .05).



***Figure 5.1.* Differences Across Rapport Protocol for Accurate Responses to Misleading Questions.**

**5.3.2 Non-verbal behaviour**

The impact of each of the factors on several non-verbal behaviours was examined. These were percentage of time the interviewer and child spent in mutual eye gaze, percentage of time the child spent smiling, and the number of adaptors the child used. The MANOVA revealed an overall significant effect of Age group, *F* (2, 80) = 3.64, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .12. The univariate analyses showed 8-10 year olds (*M* = 18.12ms) spent longer in mutual eye gaze than the 5-7 year olds (*M* = 12.97ms), *F* (1, 82) = 4.57, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .05. Similarly, the 5-7 year olds displayed more adaptors (*M* = 1.43) than the 8-10 year olds (*M* = .3), *F* (1, 82) = 5.06, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .06. There was also a significant overall effect of Gender, *F* (2, 80) = 3.44, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .11. Females (*M* = 18.11ms) spent longer in mutual eye gaze with the interviewer than male participants (*M* = 12.97), *F* (1, 82) = 6.49, *p* < .05, ηp2 = .07. Females (*M* = 4.90ms) also spent more time smiling in the interview than the males (*M* = 2.89ms), *F* (1, 82) = 4.03, *p* <.05, ηp2 =.05. There was no main effect for Rapport protocol, *F* (4, 162) = 1.39, *p* = .22, ηp2 =.05, and there were no significant interactions (all *p’s* > .05; please refer to Tables 11.1 to 11.3 for means and standard deviations for each of the non-verbal measures).

**Table 5.5**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Time Spent in Mutual Eye Gaze (ms) Following the Different Rapport Protocols and Across Age Groups** | | | |
|  | **5-7** | **8-10** | **Total** |
| **Play** | 13.25 (11.61) | 19.67 (14.09) | 32.92 (25.07) |
| **Open** | 16.63 (15.10) | 20.69 (14.02) | 37.32 (29.12) |
| **Control** | 8.35 (6.05) | 15.31 (7.43) | 23.66 (13.48) |
| **Total** | 38.23 (32.76) | 55.67 (35.54) | 93.90 (67.67) |

***Note. Standard deviations for each score are in the brackets.***

**Table 5.6**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Time Spent Smiling (ms) Following the Different Rapport Protocols and Across Age Groups** | | | |
|  | **5-7** | **8-10** | **Total** |
| **Play** | 3.03 (3.47) | 6.00 (6.04) | 9.03 (9.51) |
| **Open** | 5.69 (11.42) | 4.70 (5.14) | 10.39 (16.56) |
| **Control** | 3.51 (5.73) | 3.28 (3.19) | 6.79 (8.92) |
| **Total** | 12.23 (20.62) | 13.98 (14.37) | 26.21 (34.99) |

***Note. Standard deviations for each score are in the brackets.***

**Table 5.7**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Number of Adaptors Following the Different Rapport Protocols and Across Age Groups** | | | |
|  | **5-7** | **8-10** | **Total** |
| **Play** | 0.88 (2.75) | 0.00 (0.00) | 0.88 (2.75) |
| **Open** | 1.13 (3.74) | 0.44 (1.31) | 1.57 (5.05) |
| **Control** | 2.12 (2.93) | 0.38 (1.12) | 2.50 (4.05) |
| **Total** | 4.13 (9.42) | 0.82 (2.43) | 4.95 (11.85) |

***Note. Standard deviations for each score are in the brackets.***

**5.3.3 Interpersonal rapport**

A MANOVA was not used to analyse interpersonal rapport levels as this measurement had only one dependent variable. A three-way factorial ANOVA was used to analyse this with Rapport type, Age group and Gender as the between subjects factors. The ANOVA revealed no main effect of Age group, *F* (1, 82) = .10, *p* = .75, ηp2= .001; Gender *F* (1, 82) = .07, *p* = .80, ηp2= .001; or Rapport type *F* (2, 82) = .95, *p*= .39, ηp2= .02. There were no significant interactions (all *p’s* > .05; please refer to Table 12.1 for expressivity means and standard deviations).

**Table 5.8**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Expressivity Rating Following the Different Rapport Protocols and Across Age Groups** | | | |
|  | **5-7** | **8-10** | **Total** |
| **Play** | 4.85 (0.68) | 5.01 (0.73) | 9.86 (1.41) |
| **Open** | 4.40 (1.01) | 4.79 (0.97) | 9.19 (1.98) |
| **Control** | 4.86 (0.86) | 4.49 (1.06) | 9.35 (1.92) |
| **Total** | 14.11 (2.55) | 14.29 (2.76) | 28.40 (5.31) |

***Note. Standard deviations for each score are in the brackets.***

**5.4 Discussion**

**5.4.1 Summary**

Overall differences in rapport protocol were found for the 8-10 year old age group with children giving more detailed and accurate information in the play method of rapport building than the control condition, for the entire interview and during the free narrative phase. No differences were found between the open and play methods of rapport for these variables, but children who engaged in play gave more accurate responses to misleading questions than children in the open condition. No differences were found across rapport protocols for interpersonal rapport levels or non-verbal affiliation cues. In addition, the inclusion of a rapport phase was found to have information benefits for 8-10 but not 5-7 year olds. This effect was demonstrated for the entire interview as well as the free narrative phase.

Typical age effects were found with the 8-10 year olds giving more detailed and accurate information than 5-7 year olds throughout the entire interview, in the free narrative phase and in response to open questions. However, this age effect was not displayed in the control condition where no rapport building attempt was involved. The 5-7 year olds also provided a greater number of intrusions than the 8-10 year olds. In addition, the older children engaged in more mutual eye contact with the interviewer, and displayed fewer adaptors than the younger age group. Child gender was found to have consistent communicative effects, with females giving more detailed and accurate information in the entire interview and in the free narrative phase. They also smiled more than male participants.

**5.4.2 Communicative impact of the rapport building phase**

***Older children***

The first question asked in this chapter was whether or not the inclusion of a rapport building phase would improve communication and interpersonal rapport during interviews with children. This section will deal with each age group separately as a different pattern of results emerged for each. The 8-10 year olds’ recall was found to benefit from the inclusion of a rapport building phase. Interestingly, typical age effects in detail and accuracy of information were shown after exposure to both rapport building protocols, but not in the control condition. It seems therefore that 8-10 years olds’ recall was comparable with the younger age group when no rapport building was attempted. The child forensic interviewing literature consistently demonstrates a developmental trend in children’s informativeness, with older children producing more detailed and accurate information than their younger counterparts (Lamb et al., 2011). As such, the findings from the current study show that 8-10 year olds’ communication is reduced when they have not been provided with the opportunity to build rapport with the interviewer.

This finding supports the practitioner claims from chapter 3, that the rapport building phase is a tool that facilitates communication with children. When this opportunity is not provided then communication may suffer. Hershkowitz (2009) also found an age effect in her investigation of rapport building and interviewer support, and their relationship with the production of forensically relevant information in real life child investigative interviews. The benefits of rapport building and interviewer support were evident in older children only (7 to 9 year olds). She argued that these children are more influenced by social support because they have a greater understanding of social expectations and social dynamics (Hershkowitz, 2009).

This finding relates to the sub category of respect generated in the rapport model from chapter 3. The practitioners stated that older children are more socially aware, and treating them with respect was paramount for the facilitation of communication. They may be more reactive to rapport building as they recognize its social and communicative function. Rapport building is part of social etiquette where we use it to overcome a lack of familiarity in the hope of establishing a relationship (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Common sense would indicate that this was especially important when the aim of the interaction is the exchange of information. Interviews that did not involve this component would go against the social norms of information seeking interactions, and may have had a detrimental effect on the communication of the older age group.

***Younger children***

Contrary to our predictions the incorporation of a rapport building phase was found to have communicative benefits for the 8-10 year olds only. This result goes against the findings from the previous two chapters. The practitioners in chapter 3 specifically stated that they felt the rapport building phase helped younger children’s communication, by increasing their understanding of the interview process and reducing their anxieties. This was supported in our findings from chapter 4 where children aged 6 to 14 years were more informative after interacting with an adult through play, than those who did not interact with an adult. The discrepancy in the findings from both studies could be explained by differences in the post rapport communication. The children in chapter 4 were not exposed to a lengthy discussion post rapport, and were not required to recall a previous event like children in the current study. The extra demands placed on the children’s cognitive resources in this chapter may account for the differences in findings.

Logical predictions were made for the younger age group based on the previous literature (e.g. Carter et al., 1996), but it seems that children in this age bracket do not appear to be more informative or accurate after exposure to a rapport building phase. There are two possible explanations for this. Firstly, young children have a limited attention span and the requirements of the rapport phase, in addition to the substantive phase of the interview, may be too cognitively demanding. Previous research has shown that long rapport building (8 minutes or more) is related to reduced information production in children (Davies et al., 2000). Hershkowitz (2009) also found younger children are sensitive to the length of rapport building, and demonstrate higher performance when following a short rapport phase. It is possible that any motivational improvements incurred as a result of rapport building are negated by the extra demands placed on younger children’s cognitive resources. These findings make for difficult practical recommendations as how are interviewers supposed to balance the socio-emotional advantages of rapport building, particularly with reluctant children, along with the possible cognitive consequences of lengthy rapport building? Perhaps a break in between the rapport building and substantive phases of the interview would allow the interviewer and child to overcome any socio-emotional barriers, whilst providing a recuperation period for their cognitive resources. This is an area of future research for rapport building practice that is required in order to maximise the potential of the rapport phase with younger child witnesses.

An alternative explanation is that the bio pack interfered with younger children’s communication. Observation of the video clips during coding showed that quite often younger children were pre-occupied with the electrodes and wires attached to their wrists during the interview. They frequently looked down at the wires and asked questions about them during recall. The older children were less concerned about these and seemed to accept the bio pack’s inclusion in the study. In contrast, chapter 4 found benefits for younger children’s communication after play rapport when no bio pack was included. Subsequent research incorporating rapport building in a mock forensic interview setting, without the bio pack, is required to validate whether it interfered with the younger children’s recall in the present study.

**5.4.3 Differences across rapport protocols**

The second question asked in this chapter was which rapport method would have the greatest impact on information and interpersonal rapport, and would this differ dependent upon the age and gender of the child? The primary finding was that 8-10 year old children in the play rapport method gave more detailed and accurate information throughout the interview, and in the free narrative phase, than children in the control condition. This supports the findings from chapter 4. However, the present results show that this difference is not only due to the child’s collaboration with the interviewer, as no differences were found between the open rapport protocol and the control condition. If collaboration with the interviewer was the mechanism involved in the improved performance, then differences should also have been found between these conditions.

Why then is it only play rapport that provides benefits over the control condition? Both the play and open rapport protocols give the child a chance to practise communicating with the interviewer, and this is often cited as one of the reasons behind the success of the open style of rapport in previous investigations (e.g. Roberts et al., 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997). No differences were found in information detail and accuracy between the play and open styles of rapport building, therefore showing that the new play method is comparable with the current rapport protocol used by UK practitioners. Nevertheless, only play rapport, and not open rapport, was found to produce significantly greater detail and accuracy of information than the control condition.

***Anxiety reduction***

A reduction in the children’s anxiety levels was proposed in chapter 4 to explain the benefits of the play condition. This theory was derived from the social support literature (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007). Arguably the collaboration required to complete the play task is a better form of social support for children. The open style of rapport building may reduce children’s anxiety, but not to the same extent as the play method. Play is more child friendly, and is a frequent mode of interaction between children (e.g. White & Allers, 1994). As mentioned previously however, the findings are unlikely to be related to the play alone, but rather the process of collaboration using play, as the study in chapter 4 found collaborative play increased communication in comparison with solitary play. So perhaps the collaboration using play reduced any anxieties that the children had. The practitioners from chapter 3 stated that the rapport phase reduces children’s anxieties, by helping them overcome the child’s preconceived ideas about the interviewer. So it is possible that by working together with the adult, the child is less anxious and more comfortable in their presence.

To interpret this from a cognitive perspective, it would seem that recall is improved to a greater extent in the play rapport method. This also fits with the anxiety reduction hypothesis as previous research has found social support improves the accuracy of recall (Almerigogna et al., 2007; Nathanson & Saywitz, 2003). Individuals who are overly anxious struggle to focus during cognitive tasks as they are often preoccupied with their worry. According to processing efficiency theory (Eysenck & Calvo, 1992) those who are anxious would have less cognitive resources available to deal with the task at hand. The recall of the pirate event, especially after a week’s delay, would be a cognitively demanding task for the children. If they were anxious then it seems logical that this would interfere with their memory performance. If play rapport reduces anxiety by providing additional social support, then this may account for the differences in the detail and accuracy of the information remembered by the children. Further research is required to validate this interpretation and this is covered in chapter 6.

***Communicative scaffolding***

A competing hypothesis, which was also outlined in chapter 4, is related to the theory of meta-linguistic awareness (Lamb & Brown, 2006; Saywitz & Snyder, 1996). This involves the children’s understanding about the communicative requirements of the interaction (see chapter 1 section 1.2.3 and chapter 4 section 4.4.4). The inclusion of a rapport protocol for the older children perhaps scaffolds the interaction and increased their understanding about the level of input that was required from them. In support, the practitioners (chapter 3) mentioned the rapport phase often set the tone for the remainder of the interview, and facilitated children’s understanding about the demands of the task. Researchers investigating the influence of the open style of rapport have argued that this accounts, in part, for the findings in comparison with a direct style of rapport. In this method children are given the opportunity to practise responding to the types of questions they will be asked in the substantive phase, therefore increasing their understanding of the communicative expectations of the interview (Roberts et al., 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997).

Play rapport may increase children’s understanding to a slightly greater extent than open rapport as playing collaboratively in the initial interaction may scaffold the interactional style required for the remainder of the interview. Through completing the play task the interviewer and child work together, therefore jointly constructing the communicative dynamic. This is related to the seminal work by Clark and Wilkes-Gibbs (1986). They found that during conversation individuals collaborate to determine the communicative structure of the interaction. The content of the communication is jointly constructed and carried on until individuals reach an agreement on an accepted version of communication. The children and interviewer in the present study therefore, may have scaffold and jointly constructed an interactional style that conveys to the children their role as valuable contributors. This may have increased the children’s understanding of their expected contribution which extended to the substantive phase of the interview. Future research should manipulate and measure children’s contribution to the play task to validate and investigate this idea further.

***Suggestibility and empowerment***

An interesting finding was that the children in the play rapport condition were more resistant to misleading questions than children in the open condition, but that neither rapport conditions produced suggestibility benefits over the control condition. This does not fit with the effects found for richness and accuracy of information. If social support improves cognitive processing, through reduced anxiety or communicative scaffolding, then why have the same pattern of results not been found for suggestibility? Perhaps the suggestibility effects in this study are affected by some other psychological mechanism.

Suggestibility resistance is possibly more of a social task than a cognitive one.

Correction of an adult authority figure requires confidence from a child (Doherty-Sneddon & McAuley, 2000). As mentioned in chapter 1, there exists a power asymmetry in adult-child interactions (Davies & Bottoms, 2002a, b). Perhaps play rapport reduced the power imbalance as the children and interviewer work together to complete the task. The children’s contribution would perhaps change their perception of the adult as an authority figure, and give them the confidence to correct the interviewer should they say something that is inaccurate. This would correspond with Davis and Bottom’s (2002a, b) resistance efficacy theory that children perceive themselves as capable of correcting the interviewer when they feel supported. The children in the play rapport condition were rated as more confident by adult observers than the children in the other two conditions. However these differences were not significant, but they demonstrate a pattern in the results that may support our interpretation. The children’s non-verbal presentation may have been inhibited by the bio pack, and removal of this factor may have produced differences that were significant.

The lack of effect found between the rapport protocols and the control condition is more difficult to interpret. Arguably the open style may not influence the power dynamic as it reinforces an interactional style similar to the communication format used in adult-child conversations. This may improve cognitive processing as children practise using recall based retrieval strategies, but it may not necessarily impact upon the social dynamic between the interviewer and child. The children in the control condition on the other hand were not exposed to this prior to the interview, and so the typical adult-child social dynamic was not reinforced, but at the same time the dynamic was not improved like it may have been in the play rapport condition. These are suggestions at this stage and further research is required to investigate this finding in greater detail.

An important discovery was that the conditions did not differ with respect to the amount of inaccurate information and intrusions elicited. One of the possible criticisms about using play is that it could stimulate fantasy and lead to less accurate information from children (e.g. Everson & Boat, 1997). This also links with one of the negative comments made by the practitioners in chapter 3. They sometimes thought play could be a distraction for children. However, the results from this study show it did not have this effect and instead it encouraged greater communication. Consequently, based on the findings from this study, play rapport is a safe method to use in the rapport building phase with children with respect to information detail and accuracy.

**5.4.4 Interpersonal rapport and affiliation cues**

Overall it seems that the inclusion of a rapport building phase had no impact upon the rapport indicators from children in this study. This was not expected as the findings of chapter 4 indicated children were more expressive after interacting with the adult. It could be that the rapport building protocols had no influence on the interpersonal rapport levels between the interviewer and the children at all. Perhaps ‘rapport’ is a psychological construct that did not exist in these interactions. Nevertheless, this would be surprising as differences in expressivity for play rapport were found in the study in chapter 4, and expressivity was found to relate to the detail and accuracy of information. As differences were found in information production in the current study, due to the effects of changes in rapport protocol, then it is surprising that there were no accompanying differences in the rapport measure. As mentioned above, this may be due to the presence of the bio pack. Expressivity is measured by rating how animated a person is with respect to their facial expressions and gestures (Bernieri, 2005). The children were asked to hold their hands still so as to not interfere with the recording on the bio pack. This could have led to a reduction in the levels of expressivity. The study needs to be replicated, without the use of the bio pack, to better ascertain whether or not the lack of differences for interpersonal rapport are a true representation of the effects of the different conditions.

**5.4.5 Individual differences**

Once again age effects were found with older children giving more detailed and accurate information overall, in the free narrative phase and in response to open questions, than the younger children. These are typical effects found in the child investigative interviewing literature that are accounted for by developmental differences in children’s cognitive and social ability (Lamb et al., 2011). There was greater mutual eye contact between the interviewer and the children in the older age group. This could however, be related to the increased communication overall. We tend to look at the person we are communicating with during speaking portions of an interaction (Doherty-Sneddon et al., 2002). So the increased gaze could be as a result of the increased communication carried out by the older children. In addition, younger children displayed more adaptors than older children. When children use adaptors (self-touching behaviours of the head, face and torso) this is thought to be a self-comforting gesture. Perhaps the children in the younger age group were less comfortable than the older children. However, the overall frequency of this behaviour was low.

Gender differences were also found that match the effects revealed in chapter 4. Females gave more detailed and accurate information in the entire interview and the free narrative phase, and smiled more at the interviewer. As explained in chapter 4 girls are thought to have better interpersonal skills than boys (e.g. Dalton, 1983; Philippot & Feldman, 1990), and their language skills develop at a faster rate (Zevenbergen & Ryan, 2010). This may account for the gender differences found. In addition, the interviewer was female and the girls may have found it easier to relate to a female interviewer than the boys. Gender did not however interact with rapport protocol, and so the gender effects had no bearing on the success of the different rapport methods.

**5.4.6 Methodological considerations**

One of the main considerations was the use of the bio pack interfering with the recall of the younger children and the measure of expressivity. Both of these have been covered in the sections above, and the present study should be replicated without the inclusion of the bio pack to compare the effects.

Similar to chapter 4, this study did not use children involved in real life investigative interviews. The motivation levels for these children may therefore be different. Rapport building is primarily a social construct that has both social and cognitive implications, and it is important to consider how the effects may differ with children in real investigations. We would expect their motivation to communicate to be lower and for their anxieties to be greater. As such, the benefits found for rapport building may be superior as there is greater room for improvement when interacting with these children.

As is common in laboratory research with investigative interviewing, a single interviewer conducted the interviews. This could be interpreted as a strength with respect to reducing interviewer variability (e.g. Dando et al., 2009). Nonetheless, future research should employ a number of investigative interviewers to assess rapport building, and in particular play rapport’s influence on children’s communication. On a positive note, it is possible that the advantages of play rapport may be greater for interviewers who struggle in building rapport with children. It could be a tool used to overcome any difficulties the interviewer may have when initially interacting with the child.

**5.4.7 Conclusions**

In sum, the inclusion of a rapport building phase was found to impact upon the detail and accuracy of information provided by 8-10 year old children in reports of a staged event. It seems that this form of social support is required to enhance the communication of this age group. This was interpreted from a socio-emotional perspective in that older children are more aware of the social requirements of interactions with unfamiliar adults, and would be less motivated to communicate when these social prerequisites are not in place.

In addition, adoption of a collaborative play task in the rapport building phase of the interview increased the detail and accuracy of older children’s reports of the event, and was comparable, in information production, with the current protocol used in the UK. Various interpretations were proposed in the present study including anxiety reduction and communicative scaffolding. Furthermore, play rapport was found to increase resistance to suggestibility for all children regardless of age group, when compared with the open style of rapport building. It could be that the collaboration empowered the children, and subsequently gave them the confidence to correct the adult interviewer. Play rapport was found to have no detrimental effects for the children’s communication. Consequently, these findings show that play rapport could be a tool used by practitioners to successfully improve the detail and accuracy of recall provided by older child witnesses. The lack of effects found for interpersonal rapport, and the recall of the younger age group are in contrast to the findings from the previous chapters, and the social support literature. It is thought that the intrusive nature of the bio pack may account for these effects. The authors urge that the study is replicated without the inclusion of the bio pack before the implications of these findings for younger children are fully considered.

**Chapter Six**

**Rapport Protocol, Communication and Anxiety in Mock Forensic Interviews with Children**

**6.1 Introduction**

The findings of chapter 5 showed the importance of the rapport building phase for older children’s recall. In addition, it uncovered the communicative benefits of the play method of rapport building for older children’s communication, and for 5-10 year olds’ resistance to suggestibility. Nevertheless, the underlying psychological mechanisms that account for these advantages in children’s communication are not clear. Theoretical explanations for the benefits of *social support* have previously been examined in the child interview literature (see Chapter 1 section 1.5). However, the psychological underpinnings of the rapport building phase, and play rapport, have never been empirically investigated. Several theoretical interpretations have been proposed in the previous two chapters: anxiety reduction, communicative scaffolding and empowerment. This chapter directly addresses one of these interpretations. Anxiety reduction has been implicated in the information benefits of social support (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007). As rapport building is a form of social support used in child investigative interviewing, this chapter will explore whether changes in anxiety may account for the findings from chapter 5.

**6.1.1 Social support**

Evidence from the social support literature has overwhelmingly demonstrated its positive impact on children’s memory performance (e.g. Goodman et al., 1991). From a developmental perspective this seems logical as developmental theorists emphasise the importance of providing a supportive environment to maximise children’s cognitive performance (Vygotsky, 1962). Both Goodman et al (1991) and Carter et al (1996) found interviewer support improved children’s recall and resistance to misleading questions. The authors of these studies suggested interviewer support may produce these effects by reducing children’s anxiety. Children have reported that participation in the legal process can be unpleasant, and they are often anxious and apprehensive when communicating their experiences (Westcott & Davies, 1996). Consequently, the authors of the social support literature state that support provided by the interviewer should ease children’s anxieties and increase their ability to remember information correctly.

**6.1.2 The relationship between anxiety and social support**

As mentioned in chapter 1, Davis and Bottoms (2002b) also compared the effects of supportive and non-supportive interviewers on children’s memory performance (5-7 year olds) and found similar recall effects. They also found children were less anxious in the supportive condition as measured by the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAI-C, Spielberger et al., 1973). Almerigogna et al. (2007) conducted this study with older children (8-11 year olds) and once again found those interviewed in a non-supportive manner were less likely to correct misleading information, and were measured as more anxious by the STAI-C.

The positive influence of support on anxiety can also be extended to the location in which children are asked to recall their information. Nathanson and Saywitz (2003) investigated the influence of environment on recall. They were interested in whether the court room environment decreased the amount of information remembered by children. In the study the children were asked to recall a previously experienced event in either a familiar classroom or in a court room; the authors hypothesized that the court room would be less supportive. The children were found to give more detailed free recall and correct responses to direct questions in the classroom. Children also displayed greater heart rate variability in the courtroom. Nathanson and Saywitz (2003) stated that increased heart rate was indicative of the children’s anxiety, and anxiety interfered with their recall in the courtroom. Therefore, the court room environment may have provided the least support which negatively affected the children’s recall and anxiety.

In contrast to Almerigogna et al. (2007) and Carter et al. (1996), Nathanson and Saywitz found no differences for resistance to misleading questions. The findings from chapter 5 in this thesis also found a diverging pattern of results for recall performance and suggestibility. Play and open rapport produced similar results in terms of the detail and accuracy of information, and the children in the play condition demonstrated benefits for these aspects of communication in comparison to a control condition. Nevertheless, no differences emerged between either of the rapport protocols in comparison with the control condition for suggestibility, but play did however have suggestibility benefits in comparison with the open style of rapport. Almerigogna et al. (2007) found anxiety was a mediator of the relationship between social support and suggestibility. But reduced anxiety, as a result of social support, cannot account for all of the findings from chapter 5 otherwise the pattern of results for recall would match those of suggestibility. As mentioned in chapter 5, the author therefore proposed, that the recall effects were due to a reduction in anxiety, which produced an increase in cognitive processing, as social support should be evident in both rapport methods. The suggestibility effects however were instead attributed to increased empowerment.

Therefore, how might social support, in the form of the rapport phase, improve children’s cognitive processing and subsequent recall? Research has shown that the performance of anxious individuals is inferior in cognitive tasks in comparison with non-anxious individuals (Eysenck & Calvo, 1992). Eysenck (1992) stated that participants who score high on trait anxiety perform worse, because they are pre-occupied with concerns about failure and this interferes with their cognitive processing. The research described in section 6.1.2 measured state as opposed to trait anxiety. State is different to trait anxiety as it is concerned with the anxiety that a person is experiencing at a specific point in time. Trait anxiety on the other hand measures the tendency for a child to experience anxiety (Spielberger et al., 1973). State anxiety is of greater relevance to the current topic as the research is about the increase in anxiety experienced as a result of the interview process, and the decrease found when children are provided with interviewer support. State anxiety is sensitive to changes in the environment, and so could be affected by the behaviour of the interviewer.

Farber and Spence (1953) found that high state anxiety reduced individuals performance on difficult cognitive tasks, and that like trait anxiety, they attributed this to the effects of intrusive thoughts and worry. Therefore according to processing efficiency theory, cognitive processing is interrupted during recall for anxious individuals, resulting in less cognitive resources available to complete the task (Eysenck & Calvo, 1992). This explains the relationship found between anxiety, recall and interviewer support in child investigative interviews (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007). The children’s cognitive resources are more intact and they are better able to search their memories as a result of the support (Almerigogna et al., 2007).

As mentioned previously, the rapport building phase can be viewed as a form of social support and was devised specifically to make the child feel more at ease, and to build a relationship with the interviewer (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). The effects of the rapport building phase have never been investigated from a social support perspective. When trying to understand the psychological mechanisms underlying the effects of chapter 5 it seemed logical to turn to the social support literature. Based on this it may be possible that the improvements in recall as a result of rapport building (in particular play rapport) may be due to a reduction in anxiety. In support of this theory, the investigative interviewers from chapter 3 stated they thought rapport facilitated communication by making children feel more comfortable. Furthermore, play has been shown to act as a buffer for children’s anxiety (Barnett & Storm, 1991). Therefore, the present study investigates the impact of the rapport building phase on children’s anxiety levels, and explores whether this is related to the production of the children’s information from chapter 5.

**6.1.3 The purpose of the present study and specific predictions**

The current study attempted to extend the findings of chapter 5 by examining whether the inclusion of a rapport phase impacted upon the children’s anxiety levels in the same mock investigative interview setting. In addition, it compared the three rapport protocols (play rapport, open rapport and a control condition) to explore whether differences emerged with respect to their influence on the children’s anxiety. The same participants and methodology used in chapter 5 was examined in the present study. In addition to the verbal and non-verbal information previously gathered, data was collected on the children’s state anxiety and heart rate. The latter two variables were not analysed in the previous chapter and are the main focus of examination in the present study.

The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAI-C, Spielberger et al., 1973) has been used extensively to examine the effects of social support on children’s anxiety levels (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007; Davis & Bottoms, 2002b; Nathanson & Saywitz, 2003). This test has good validity and reliability (Spielberger et al., 1973), and was used in the present study as a self-report measure of state anxiety.

Nevertheless, the use of a self-report measure may be less valid with children, as there is the risk that they may answer in the way that they think the interviewer wants them to (Campbell & Rapee, 1996). Therefore, a physiological measure of anxiety was also recorded. Heart rate can be used as an indicator of arousal and has been employed in other studies to assess children’s anxiety (e.g. Nathanson & Saywitz, 2003). Quas and Lench (2006) recorded children’s heart rate whilst they encoded and retrieved information about a fear eliciting video clip. Children with a higher heart rate at the retrieval stage gave more incorrect responses when they were interviewed by a non-supportive adult. Therefore, heart rate was also used in the current study to measure the children’s anxiety levels, as it may be a more accurate method than the STAI-C for investigating the impact of rapport protocol on anxiety, and the relationship between anxiety and information production by the children in chapter 5.

Prior to gathering the data, the hypothesis was that anxiety would be associated with poor recall. Given the results already considered, we predict the older children’s anxiety levels will be lower than the younger children’s in both the play and open methods of rapport building. These children may have produced more detailed and accurate information if the inclusion of the rapport phase reduced their anxiety levels, and increased their memory performance (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007). We also predict the older children to be less anxious in the play rapport method than the children in the control condition, but no differences to be found between the open and play rapport protocols, and the open and control conditions (see chapter 5). It is possible that the play rapport protocol is a more effective method of social support for the children than the open protocol, and may reduce their anxiety levels to a greater extent when compared with the control condition (e.g. Carter et al., 1996). This too may account for the differences found in the children’s information across the rapport protocols in chapter 5.

Play was also found to increase the children’s resistance to suggestibility in comparison with the open method of rapport. Although we proposed the suggestibility effects in chapter 5 were due to empowerment, the previous literature has found that changes in anxiety are related to responses to misleading questions (Almerigogna et al., 2007). Therefore children in the play condition may demonstrate less anxiety than those who experienced the open style of rapport building.

Based on the theory that anxiety influences children’s cognitive processing (Eysenck & Calvo, 1992) we also expect to find positive relationships between changes in anxiety, and the amount of information elicited by the children and their resistance to misleading questions. Gender and developmental differences in anxiety were not investigated in the literature previously discussed. In chapter 5 the older children and females produced more detailed and accurate information than younger children and males. These differences were attributed to changes in the children’s cognitive development as opposed to the influence of social support. As differences were found in the previous chapters these factors will be included in this study, but the analyses are purely exploratory and no predictions are made with respect to these variables.

**6.2 Method**

**6.2.1 Participants**

The individuals who took part in Chapter 5 also participated in this study (*N* = 94). Data from 24 of the children were excluded from analysis for the heart rate data due to faulty recordings on the bio pack at either the baseline or experimental stage of the study. This left a final sample of 70 children from two different age groups (**5-7 year olds**, *n*= 36, *M* = 80 months, *SD* = 7; and **8-10 year olds**, *n* = 34, *M* = 115 months, *SD* = 9). There were 37 males (**5-7 year olds**; *n* = 20; and **8-10 year olds**, *n* = 17) and 33 females (**5-7 year olds**, *n* = 16; and **8-10 year olds**, *n* = 17).

For the State anxiety data 5 of the children did not have their baseline data recorded due to time constraints. This left a final sample of 89 for this variable from two different age groups (**5-7 year olds**, *n* = 48, *M* = 78 months, *SD* = 8; and **8-10 year olds**, *n* = 41, *M* = 108 months, *SD* = 10). There were 44 males (**5-7 year olds**; *n* = 26; and **8-10 year olds**, *n* = 18) and 45 females (**5-7 year olds**, *n* = 22; and **8-10 year olds**, *n* = 23).

The materials, design, procedure and data coding for this study were the same as described in Chapter 5. Please refer to sections 5.2.2 to 5.2.4 for further detailed information.

**6.2.2 Measures**

The measures for the verbal data are covered in chapter 5 (see section 5.2.4). The children’s anxiety levels were recorded and these measures are covered in greater detail here.

***Heart rate***

A bio pack was used to measure continuous heart rate. The children’s baseline heart rate was recorded at the beginning of the pirate event. This was measured by attaching the wires of the bio pack to two electrodes placed on the children’s wrists. The children’s heart rates were displayed on a laptop, and their baseline heart rate was measured for 3 minutes. During data reduction the children’s heart rate variability was noted at 30 second intervals, and the mean of these intervals served as the children’s baseline heart rate score (Nathanson & Saywitz, 2003). The standard deviation was used for heart rate variability (Nathanson & Saywitz, 2003). Children’s heart rate scores can be affected by their age and physical stature (Campbell & Rapee, 1996). Therefore researchers are encouraged to use heart rate variability to overcome the differences that could emerge due to these factors (Nathanson & Saywitz, 2003).

For the interview phase of the experiment the heart rate variability was recorded continuously, but not during the rapport building phase as movement can interfere with the recordings (e.g. when carrying out the play task). Once again measurements were noted at every 30 second interval, and the mean of these served as the heart rate variability for the children during the interview (Nathanson & Saywitz, 2003). All heart rates of less than 40 and greater than 165 were attributed to equipment error and deleted from the data set (Nathanson & Saywitz, 2003). Approximately 10% of the data points from the sample fell into these ranges and were deleted. The measurement used for the analyses was the difference between the baseline heart rate variability and the interview heart rate variability. Subsequently, it was the changes in the mean heart rate variability that were analysed across the different factors (rapport type, age and gender).

***Anxiety questionnaire***

The questionnaire used to measure anxiety was Spielberger et al’s (1973) State-Trait Anxiety Inventory for Children (STAI-C). Only the State component of the questionnaire was used as the study was concerned with the impact of rapport protocol on the children’s anxiety levels at a specific point in time. The Trait component measures the tendency for a child to experience anxiety and this was not relevant to the aims of the current study. The form for the measurement of the state component comprises 20 questions. It measures anxiety with statements like ‘I feel very upset, upset or not upset’ and ‘I feel very worried, worried and not worried’. The instructions are written at the top of the questionnaire and were explained to the children. They were asked to select which version of each statement best described how they felt. These were distributed to all children at the end of the pirate event to get a baseline score for state anxiety, and at the end of the interview to gain an interview score for state anxiety. Raw scores on the STAI-C range from 20 to 60, with 60 reflecting the most anxiety. The measurement used for the analyses was the difference between the baseline anxiety score and the experiment anxiety score. Therefore, it was the changes in state anxiety that were analysed across the different factors (rapport type, age and gender). **Please note that with the exception of section 6.3.1, the measures subjected to analyses were the *changes* in heart rate variability and state anxiety scores from the pirate event (baseline) to the interview phase of the experiment.**

**6.3 Results**

In the first section t tests were used to examine whether differences in anxiety emerged between the baseline and interview phases of the experiment. Three way ANOVAs were then carried out with Rapport protocol, Age and Gender as between subjects variables to investigate their impact on changes in anxiety levels. Finally, pearson correlations were used to examine the relationship between the children’s anxiety, recall and suggestibility.

**6.3.1 Difference between baseline and interview anxiety scores**

Paired t tests were used to investigate whether anxiety scores differed between the pirate event (baseline) and the interview phase of the experiment.

***Heart rate***

The t test showed that heart rate variability decreased significantly between baseline (*M* = 11.63bpm) and the interview (*M* = 10.05bpm), *t* (69) = 3.13, *p* < .05

***STAI-C***

The t test showed that state anxiety score did not decrease significantly between baseline (*M* = 25.19) and the interview (*M* = 25.34), *t* (88) = .53, *p* = .60

**6.3.2 Effects of Rapport protocol, Age and Gender on changes in anxiety**

A three-way analysis of variance was carried out with Rapport Type (play *vs.* open *vs.* control), Age group (5-7 *vs.* 8-10) and Gender as the independent variables.

***Heart rate***

Analyses revealed no significant effects for Rapport type, *F* (2, 58) = .26, *p* = .77, ηp2= .01; Age group, *F* (1, 58) = 1.56, *p* = .22, ηp2= .03; or Gender, *F* (1, 58) = 2.10, *p* = .15, ηp2= .15. There were no significant interactions (all *p*’s > .05). For the Age group and Rapport type means and standard deviations please refer to Table 6.1 below.

***STAI-C***

There were no significant main effects found for Rapport type, *F* (2, 77) = .84, *p* = .44, ηp2= .02; Age *F* (1, 77) = 3.22, *p* = .08, ηp2= .04; or Gender, *F* (1, 77) = .02, *p* = .90, ηp2< .001. There were no significant interactions (all *p’s* > .05). For Age group and Rapport type means and standard deviations please refer to Table 6.1 below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 6.1**  **Changes in Heart Rate Variability (bpm) and State Anxiety Across Age Groups and Rapport Protocols** | | | |
|  | **5-7** | **8-10** | **Total** |
| **Heart Rate** | | | |
| **Play** | 0.44  (3.85) | -3.45  (4.72) | -3.01  (8.57) |
| **Open** | -0.51  (3.25) | -1.91  (3.52) | -2.42  (6.77) |
| **Control** | -2.37  (2.55) | -1.26  (4.89) | -3.63  (7.44) |
| **Total** | -2.44  (9.65) | -6.62  (13.13) | -9.06  (22.78) |
| **State Anxiety** | | | |
| **Play** | -0.41  (2.92) | 0.33  (3.48) | -0.08  (6.40) |
| **Open** | -0.40  (2.82) | 0.57  (3.84) | 0.17  (6.66) |
| **Control** | 0.19  (3.17) | 2.00  (2.92) | 2.19  (6.09) |
| **Total** | -0.62  (8.91) | 2.90  (10.24) | 2.28  (19.15) |

***Note. Standard deviations for each score are in the brackets.***

**6.3.3 Relationship between changes in anxiety, recall and suggestibility**

***Heart rate***

There were no significant relationships found between changes in heart rate variability and total units of information, *r* = -.02,*N* = 70, *p* = .86, *r2 =* .0004; information given in the free narrative phase, *r* = .01, *N* = 70, *p* = .95, *r2* = .0001; total accurate information, *r* = -.02, *N* = 70, *p* = .85, *r*2 = .0004, or correct answers to misleading questions, *r* = .01, *N* = 70, *p* = .94, *r*2 = .0001.

***STAI-C***

No significant relationships were found between changes in anxiety score and total units of information given by the children, *r* = .04, *N* = 89, *p* = .74, *r2* = .0016; information given in the free narrative phase, *r* = -.01, *N* = 89, *p* = .95, *r2* = .0001; total accurate information, *r* = .11, *N* = 89, *p* = .31, *r2* = .01; or correct answers to misleading questions, *r* = .04, *N* = 89, *p* = .71, *r2* = .001.

**6.3.4 Relationship between changes in anxiety and rapport levels**

There was no significant relationship found between changes in heart rates and rapport levels, *r* = -.16, *N* = 70, *p* = .19, *r*2 = .02. In addition, there was no significant relationship between changes in state anxiety and rapport level, *r* = .05, *N* = 89, *p* = .63, *r*2 = .002.

**6.4 Discussion**

**6.4.1 Summary**

Overall, according to the heart rate data, the children’s arousal levels were reduced between the pirate event and the interview phases of the experiment. No difference was found however when measured by the State Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger et al., 1973). No significant differences were found across rapport type, age group or gender for either anxiety measures. The inclusion of a rapport phase made no impact upon the children’s anxiety levels. Finally, anxiety was not found to relate to the children’s quantity or quality of information, their suggestibility or their rapport levels.

**6.4.2 Rapport protocol and anxiety**

Contrary to our predictions there were no differences in anxiety when a rapport building phase was included in the interview, or across the three different rapport conditions. As such, it seems the differences in information found in chapter 5 cannot be accounted for by a reduction in children’s anxiety. This is unexpected as the idea that rapport building is related to anxiety has been a recurring theme throughout the thesis. Previous research investigating social support in laboratory based studies has found differences in children’s anxiety levels (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007; Davis & Bottoms 2002b). Therefore it seemed logical to expect similar effects in the present study. In addition, the practitioners in chapter 3 stated they believed the rapport phase helped children feel more comfortable with them and the interview process, and this was achieved by decreasing their anxiety. Subsequently, this was one of the proposed theories used to explain the findings of chapters 4 and 5.

Whilst anxiety reduction cannot be used to explain the effects for play rapport in the current study, it is important to keep in mind that the children were recalling a neutral event and did not appear to have been anxious to begin with. Their state anxiety scores were low overall in comparison with the normative data given for state anxiety in the STAI-C (30.7 to 31.0, Spielberger et al., 1973), and heart rate score was typical for non-anxious children (90.70bpm Beidel, 1988). The children discussed by the practitioners in chapter 3 are involved in real life investigative interviews, and tend to communicate information about a stressful event they have experienced or witnessed (Home Office, 2011). In addition, a disclosure can have a significant impact on many aspects of their lives, e.g. if disclosing a crime committed by a family member. These children are far more likely to be anxious and to benefit from a rapport building phase (Hershkowitz et al., 2006). Therefore this experiment should be replicated in a real world setting before the impact of the rapport phase on children’s anxiety can be fully understood.

The lack of effect for reduced anxiety is particularly surprising for the suggestibility results. The previous literature shows that social support increases correct responding to misleading questions, and that anxiety mediates these effects (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007). Therefore based on this, the children in the play rapport method should have demonstrated a greater decrease in anxiety than the children in the open method if play rapport was more supportive, as differences were found in chapter 5 between these protocols with respect to correct responses to misleading questions. Perhaps however, there were similar levels of support present for the different conditions across the interviews. The interviewer attempted to keep their behaviour towards the children similar across the conditions. The inter-rater data collected in section 5.2.4 showed that this was achieved as no differences were found across conditions for several of the interviewers’ non-verbal behaviours (e.g. smiling duration, number of head nods etc.) Therefore any differences in the support that the children felt as a result of the inclusion of rapport, could have been levelled out across conditions during the remainder of the interview where the interviewer was equally supportive. Additionally, in contrast to Almerigogna et al. (2007), no relationship was found between recall and anxiety, or suggestibility and anxiety in the present study. This further reinforces the finding that the effects for verbal information in chapter 5 cannot be accounted for by the anxiety hypothesis outlined in previous chapters.

**6.4.3 Alternative interpretations**

Differences *were* found however, in information production in chapters 4 and 5. Typical age effects in the quantity and quality of information recalled by children were present only after they had been exposed to a rapport building protocol (open or play). Furthermore, only play rapport, and not the open style, produced more detailed and accurate information compared with the control condition. Finally, children in the play rapport condition gave more correct responses to misleading questions than children in the open rapport condition. Consequently, rapport building, and in particular play rapport, enhanced older children’s recall. Based on the findings from this chapter it is clear that anxiety reduction cannot account for these effects.

As rapport research is underdeveloped, and play rapport building is a new approach, then a number of alternative explanations were proposed in chapters 4 and 5. These were based on the literature outlined in chapters 1 and 2, and the theoretical framework generated by the practitioners in chapter 3. As anxiety can now be removed from the explanations future research should consider the alternative interpretations.

An increase in children’s awareness about the communicative expectations of the interview as a result of rapport building, and in particular play rapport, could explain the pattern of results found for the detail and accuracy of older children’s recall. The open style of rapport building may scaffold the child’s communication as they gain practise in responding to the questioning style used in the substantive interview (e.g. Roberts et al., 2004). Play rapport may achieve this to a slightly greater extent as the child’s communicative contribution is scaffolded, and jointly constructed with the interviewer, when they both contribute to the completion of the play task (Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs, 1986). This interaction style may extend to the substantive phase, subsequently increasing children’s verbal contribution during the remainder of the interview. An increase in confidence and empowerment was proposed to explain the finding that children gave more correct responses to misleading questions after play rapport, than the children who experienced the open style of rapport building. It must be emphasized however, that these are hypothesized underlying psychological mechanisms at this stage and their validity must be addressed in subsequent research.

**6.4.4 Other effects**

When briefly addressing individual differences, no effects were found for age or gender with respect to the children’s anxiety. This supports our interpretation from chapter 5 that the differences found between these groups for verbal information are as a result of cognitive factors. Older children have developed better memory capabilities and are more proficient users of language (Lamb et al., 2011). The same has been found for girls in comparison with boys in childhood (e.g. Zevebergen & Ryan, 2010).

Interestingly only heart rate variability, and not state anxiety, was found to decrease between the pirate event and the interview phase of the study. Heart rate was included as a measure of physiological arousal as the author was concerned that the measurement of state anxiety would be affected by response bias from the children. Previous research has shown that self-report data is problematic with children as their responses may be affected by a desire to please the experimenter (Campbell & Rapee, 1996). This effect may be particularly powerful in the current study, as the children have spent time building a relationship with the experimenter/interviewer and may not want to report being uncomfortable. Consequently, the heart rate variability measure may be the more valid indicator of children’s anxiety levels in the current study.

**6.4.5 Methodological considerations**

As the method used in the present study was the same as that outlined in chapter 5 then the majority of the methodological considerations are the same (see chapter 5 section 5.5.6 for a review). In addition, it is possible that the findings for anxiety would be different in real life investigative interviews as the children would have greater levels of anxiety for the reasons outlined in section 6.4.2. The scope for improving recall as a result of reduced anxiety is greater with children in real life investigative interviews. These factors therefore have to be examined in this context, to fully understand their implications for children’s communication during the legal process.

**6.4.6 Conclusions**

The influence of rapport practice on children’s anxiety levels had never before been empirically investigated. Despite the discovery that rapport building improves older children’s recall, and that play rapport in particular produces richer and more accurate accounts, the present study demonstrated that the inclusion of a rapport phase, and the use of different rapport methods in a laboratory context, had no impact on the anxiety levels of children from this study. The author acknowledges that children who are not involved in real life forensic interviews may have less anxiety overall. Nevertheless, findings from previous laboratory studies have shown that social support can still have an effect on anxiety. An increase in social support and a subsequent decrease in anxiety therefore, cannot account for the information benefits found in the previous two chapters. The author hypothesizes alternatively that rapport practice may increase children’s understanding of the communicative expectations of the interview. In addition, play rapport may balance the typical power asymmetry present in adult-child interactions, leading to an increase in children’s confidence which subsequently improves their resistance to suggestibility. Future research should therefore focus on these alternative interpretations to further understand the psychological mechanisms involved in rapport building practice.

**Chapter Seven**

**Summary, Implications and Future Research**

**7.1 The communicative impact of the rapport building phase**

This thesis has examined the relationship between the rapport building phase and communication in child investigative interviews. In addition, it has designed and explored the use of a play method of rapport building for facilitating communication with children in this setting. It began by reviewing the relevant literature, introducing the developmental underpinnings of children’s communication in investigative interviews, before moving on to consider rapport building as a specific form of support used with children. The criticism that there exists a gap in the literature with respect to the rapport building component of the interview, and the various ways this can be implemented, set the way for the introduction of the four empirical chapters that addressed these issues.

The rationale for the thesis came from the observation that research on child investigative interviewing has tended to focus upon the substantive phase of the interview (Hershkowitz, 2009). It was acknowledged that this made sense from a practical perspective, as this is where the children communicate information about their alleged experiences, and is therefore the purpose of the interview (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). Nevertheless, from a developmental point of view, failure to examine the rapport building component meant that research and practice was neglecting to consider how this phase could also potentially influence children’s recall of information. Training and practice guidelines *do* encourage the incorporation of a rapport phase (Home office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). However, it was noted that there was a shortage of information for practitioners on how this phase impacts upon children’s communication, and how the success of rapport building may be influenced by individual differences. These are important considerations because they would highlight to practitioners the importance of rapport from a psychological perspective. Further, they would help guide practical recommendations for the implementation of the rapport phase across different circumstances.

Additionally, very few attempts had been made to examine different methods of rapport building (Hershkowitz, 2009). The open rapport style currently used by UK practitioners has been found to have benefits for children’s communication, but only when compared with a direct style of rapport. In addition, recent research shows that it is not being employed by practitioners (e.g. La Rooy et al., 2010). Therefore, this thesis set out to design and investigate a play based format of rapport building that could be used as an additional/alternative tool during the rapport phase. Practitioners are continuously searching for new ways to engage with children in these interviews, and would encourage innovative, evidence-based approaches that would permit a more flexible and child centred approach to building rapport.

The current chapter condenses the evidence from the four empirical chapters. First, the major findings are brought together to summarise the more important aspects of children’s performance, and to discuss how the findings explain the relationship between the rapport phase and communication. The practical implications of the research are then examined, followed by a discussion of how future investigations could expand on the ideas proposed here.

**7.2 Summarising the prominent findings**

This section summarises the *main* results of the empirical chapters and considers how they fit together to tell the story of the thesis.

***The rapport phase as a tool for facilitating communication***

Chapter 3 set the scene for the entire thesis by asking practitioners about their experiences of rapport building with child witnesses. The first study was therefore carried out to examine rapport practice in greater detail, and to gain an in depth knowledge of the decision making involved in rapport approach with children. In addition, it enabled consultation with practitioners about the design and implementation of play rapport. This fits with current thinking in investigative interviewing research where academics and practitioners work together to generate research ideas that are forward thinking, whilst feasible within an interview setting (<http://www.iiirg.org/>).

Overall, the study produced a rich and thorough insight into how the rapport phase is conducted, and how it is complicated by a number of different factors. The findings from chapter 3 demonstrate that the administration and operation of the rapport phase is far more complex than that covered in training and practice guidelines (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). The core theme generated was that the practitioners use the rapport phase as a tool to facilitate children’s information. It was clear from their responses that this is their aim during the phase, and that they use a variety of different tactics in order to achieve this. Further, they have to maintain a flexible approach as each child is different, and practitioners’ ability to adapt to this contributes to the success of the interaction. These ideas were expected to a certain extent, and are briefly mentioned in the guidelines (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). Nevertheless, *how* the rapport phase is used to facilitate communication had never before been addressed in the literature.

The overall core theme was divided into three sub-themes, which were further divided into the relevant categories. The sub- themes (assessment, adjustment and psychological outcome) documented the three principal processes involved in the rapport phase that can, according to the practitioners, lead to the facilitation of children’s communication. The first sub-theme was assessment. This was arguably the most obvious of the three themes as interviewers are explicitly instructed to use the rapport phase to assess the child and gain an understanding of their level of cognitive and social functioning (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). This particular aspect of assessment relates to the sub-category of ‘developmental stage’ that was uncovered in chapter 3. Age differences in the children’s responsiveness to rapport building were described, and this was a recurring theme throughout the entire thesis. In chapter 3 the practitioners felt the rapport phase was more beneficial for younger primary aged children. They stated these children often have a lack of understanding about the purpose of the interview, and the rapport phase gives them the opportunity to familiarise the children with the interview format. The idea of the rapport phase as a practise for the substantive interview has been the focus of the majority of the rapport phase research with children to date (e.g. Roberts et al., 2004). In addition, the NICHD protocol strongly endorses the use of the rapport phase as a practise interview (Lamb & Brown, 2006). At no point did the investigative interviewers in chapter 3 mention the rapport phase as a practise, but their explanation that it increases children’s understanding of the interview process seems to fit with this theory.

In terms of age differences the practitioners also felt older children, especially teenagers, have a greater appreciation of the interview’s function, and therefore the rapport phase is not as important for these young people. To date this appears to be the first time in the child interview literature that the responsiveness of adolescents to the rapport phase has been considered. This is surprising given that these children represent a substantial shift in social development and functioning (e.g. Meeus et al., 2010). They are at a stage in which they are attempting to establish a distinct identity, and often exhibit a desire to be treated with an appropriate level of maturity (Saywitz, 2002). This should therefore be considered, when deciding how to interact and interview these young people.

A further aspect of the age differences component mentioned by the practitioners was that they thought younger children may have pre-conceived ideas about the interviewer and the interview process. As the police are typically viewed as figures of authority (e.g. Bruck & Ceci, 1999) the interviewers thought the time spent in the rapport phase with the child enabled them to change this perception. They believed this contributed to a reduction in children’s anxiety, and increased children’s ability to provide information throughout the interview. The idea that interviewers are a source of anxiety for children because of the perceived power imbalance was another recurring theme throughout the thesis. This is addressed in greater detail below.

Another prominent finding from the sub-theme of assessment was that the rapport phase is used to assess how willing the child is to communicate. This seems to work on a continuum from ‘reluctant’ to ‘ready to disclose’. With respect to the former, the practitioners get an indication from the rapport phase whether or not the child is anxious about communicating, and then focus on trying to alleviate their concerns and encourage them to communicate. In addition, the interviewers mentioned that reluctance interacts with the identity of the perpetrator and the type of allegation. This supports previous research that has found that children often feel ashamed and embarrassed about their experiences, particularly if of a sexual nature, and this can interfere with their motivation to disclose (e.g. Goodman-Brown et al., 2003). Also, children are less likely to disclose if the alleged perpetrator is a family member and other family members do not offer support (Malloy et al., 2011). Consequently, awareness of these issues, along with the child’s reluctant presentation during the rapport phase, can assist the interviewer in deciding how to use rapport to overcome the child’s initial hesitancy, e.g. reassurance, or longer time spent establishing trust.

Alternatively, the interviewers stated that sometimes children are ready to communicate and talk about the alleged issues from the very beginning of the rapport phase, and consequently the interviewers then move on to the substantive phase or omit the rapport phase altogether. This contradicts guidelines that “rapport is essential” (Home Office, 2011, p. 70). If the aim of the rapport phase is to facilitate communication then its purpose negates itself in these circumstances. This is one of the prominent findings from this chapter because this issue has not previously been addressed in the literature, but has important implications for interview practice. The interviewers felt they should not be restricted by the guidelines here, and that if their assessment is that the child is a willing communicator then the rapport phase should be discontinued. Therefore, during the rapport phase the interviewers can assess the child’s level of co-operation, and use this as a guide for the remainder of their rapport phase and interview approach.

The second sub-theme uncovered in chapter 3 was ‘adjustment’. This was the second stage involved in the process of using the rapport phase as a tool. The interviewers assess the child’s individual presentation in the rapport phase and then based on this they adapt their approach with the aim of facilitating communication. A sub-category generated from this theme was ‘engagement’. The interviewers stated that if the child is reluctant to communicate then they often try to capture their interest to initiate the interaction. This is related to the behaviour of attention, which is one of Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal’s (1990) theorised components of rapport. When two people are engaged in an interaction consisting of rapport, then they tend to exhibit intense focus on each other (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). In order to obtain this focus from the child, the interviewer must capture their interest. They frequently mentioned that the topic of conversation during rapport is central to achieving this. If they manage to uncover a topic, e.g. a television show, that the child really enjoys then this opens the channels of communication and more often than not children are eager to speak about this. The interviewer’s task is to identify something that would interest the child in order to engage their attention.

‘Engagement’ was linked to another sub-category of the adjustment phase which was ‘demonstrate interest’. The interviewers feel that it is important to appear genuinely interested in what children have to say. It is more than just listening; the interviewer has to convey that they care and take the children’s concerns seriously. The interviewers explained that disclosure is difficult for some children, and this sub-category helps them overcome some of the initial reluctance displayed by the children. This approach would typically be characterized as a facet of social support which improves the recall of children in investigative interviews (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007; Goodman et al., 1991). Additionally, the interviewers stated that the child’s perception of the adult as an authority figure is also altered when they appear interested in what the child has to say. They thought it ‘humanises’ them in the eyes of the child and helps to reduce any feelings of intimidation that the child may have. This relates to the theory of empowerment generated from the previous literature, and the benefits this has for the children’s communication in terms of increasing their resistance to suggestibility (Davis & Bottoms, 2002 a, b).

The final ‘adjustment’ category was ‘natural interaction’. This category is central to the idea of the facilitatory effects of rapport building. Some of the interviewers stated that rapport is an important function of everyday conversational discourse, and that it should not be viewed as a ‘mechanical’ part of the interview procedure. From a communication perspective, rapport is attempted between individuals when they first get to know each other, and is an integral part of social etiquette that is required when individuals aim to maintain the relationship (Bernieri, 2005). Some of the interviewers stated that the forensic interview is no different, and that the rapport phase was essential for the progression of the communication. This is another prominent finding as this is the essence of rapport building as a communication tool, but it is seldom described that way to practitioners (see practitioners chapter 3; Myklebust & Alison, 2000).

The interviewers also stated that it is important that the rapport phase seems natural and not forced to the child. They said they purposefully try to use something in the environment to stimulate conversation, e.g. if interviewed in school then they ask about the class the child has just participated in. They said if they mention something that isn’t appropriate to the context then that is confusing for the child, and acts as a communication inhibitor. Therefore an attempt is made by the interviewer to adjust their approach, to make the communication in the rapport phase seem like a typical introductory part of a conversation.

The final stage of the rapport process was the child’s ‘psychological outcome’ after the interviewer adjusts their approach. The first sub-category ‘comfortable’ was about making the child feel more comfortable than they had been at the beginning of the interview. This is an aspect of the rapport phase that is more widely covered in the child investigative interviewing literature and is mentioned in practice guidelines (e.g. Home Office, 2011). It corresponds with the social support research that has found interviewer provided support reduces children’s anxiety, which results in an improvement in the accuracy of their information (Almerigogna et al., 2007; Davis and Bottoms, 2002a, b). This theory was used frequently throughout the thesis as a possible explanation for the communicative benefits of rapport practice found in chapters 4 and 5. Based on this, chapter 6 examined the relationship between rapport, communication and anxiety. This is discussed in the summaries of chapters 5 and 6 below.

The other major sub-category of ‘psychological outcome’ that was of central importance to the overall story of the thesis was ‘respect’. During the course of the interviews with the practitioners they often spoke about the importance of acknowledging the child’s wishes. They approach this in a variety of different ways: by moving on from the rapport phase if the child is willing to communicate about the substantive issues, by showing interest in and genuine concern for what the child has to say, by creating a natural discourse with the child, and by engaging their attention. Theoretically this once again relates to the power dynamics of the interaction, and how an interview approach that generates respect may increase the child’s confidence when communicating with the interviewer (Davis & Bottoms, 2002a, b).

The theme of ‘respect’ was of particular relevance to rapport building with older children and teenagers. The interviewers frequently mentioned they were concerned that the rapport phase is patronising for older children as they tend to have a better understanding of the interview process, and don’t appreciate being ‘babied’ by the interviewer. As mentioned previously this relates to the social development of adolescents. This age group are trying to establish their own individuality and identity (e.g. Meeus et al., 2010) and may view the rapport phase as condescending. Consequently, it is important for the interviewers to generate respect with these young people during the rapport phase, and the practitioners felt this acts as a communication facilitator.

In brief, chapter 3 produced an overall theory for the function of the rapport phase and for the first time deconstructed practitioners’ approach. It demonstrated the complexities involved when trying to establish rapport with children in a forensic context. Finally, it provided some of the foundation for the interpretation of the findings from the experimental chapters. Many of the categories generated subsequently corresponded with the results from chapters 4-6 and are discussed in greater detail below.

***The design of play rapport and its impact on children’s communication***

In addition, chapter 3 provided the opportunity to consult with practitioners about the use of play rapport. They were not aware that the researcher intended on investigating this because this could have biased their responses. So the questions relating to play rapport were directed towards whether they had used play to build rapport before, and their professional assessment of its use during the rapport phase. In agreement with the overall theory of the rapport phase as a communication tool, some of the practitioners said they found that play facilitated communication. This was further supported from the findings in chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4 set out to assess play rapport’s communicative impact, and also to investigate whether this differed across age groups and the gender of the children. Prior to examining its effectiveness within the context of an investigative interview, it seemed logical to first of all assess whether play rapport could improve communication and interpersonal rapport. The study also provided the opportunity to test the different play tasks before they were used in the subsequent studies.

In accordance with some of the practitioners’ comments, that play may benefit communication; the study in chapter 4 found children gave more detailed and spontaneous information after engaging in a collaborative play task with the interviewer, than the children in the control condition. Contrary to the age differences mentioned in chapter 3, collaborative play rapport was equally effective across the three age groups (6-7, 8-10 and 12-14 year olds). These communicative benefits were mirrored in the differences found in expressivity. As expressivity is one of the non-verbal components of rapport (Bernieri et al., 1996), it seems collaborative play also lead to interpersonal rapport between the experimenter and children.

At this early stage in the assessment of play rapport it was not possible to explain the theoretical reasons why collaborative play enhanced the children’s communication. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to interpret the findings using the categories generated from the practitioners in chapter 3; as well as the previous child investigative interviewing literature. The first suggestion was that play captured the children’s interest (chapter 3) because it is developmentally appropriate. During the discussion of play in chapter 3, some of the practitioners stated they find play beneficial because the children are familiar with play behaviour and it is easier to engage them in conversation about this topic. Perhaps play is effective because children are typically interested in play, and it is therefore a successful tool for initiating conversation with them (Hudak, 2000).

A second suggestion was that the children were more confident with the interviewer after collaborating with them to complete the task and this was demonstrated by the increase in expressivity (e.g. Krauss et al., 1996). The typical power asymmetry evident in adult-child interactions could have been reduced as the children may have been empowered after contributing to the successful completion of the play task. Empowerment is thought to facilitate children’s communication and this may account for the information benefits of the collaborative play approach.

The possibility of communicative scaffolding was also proposed in that the dynamic involved in collaborative play may have facilitated the children’s understanding of the expectation of their contribution during the interaction. This may have been established during the rapport phase and this communicative dynamic subsequently carried forward to the post play conversation.

The final theory suggested was that collaborative play reduced children’s anxiety levels. Interviewer-provided support has been found to reduce children’s anxiety and improve their recall (Almerigogna et al., 2007; Davis & Bottoms, 2002b). Support provided from the interviewer through play may have reduced the children’s anxiety and increased their motivation to communicate (practitioners in chapter 3; Davis & Bottoms, 2002a, b; Carter et al., 1996; Goodman et al., 1991). This interpretation was initially suggested and is covered in greater detail below during our summary of the findings from chapters 5 and 6.

Finally, no age, gender or task differences were found across the communication or interpersonal rapport variables. Collaborative play therefore was an effective communication tool for both boys and girls, and different age groups. Further, the findings showed the play tasks used in this chapter could reliably be used in subsequent chapters when comparing play rapport to alternative rapport approaches.

In summary, chapter 4 demonstrated that play rapport was an effective means of enhancing children’s communication and interpersonal rapport with an adult. It also supported the theory of rapport as a communication tool with children, and permitted the application of some of the categories produced in chapter 3. It paved the way for the comparisons between play rapport and open rapport in chapters 5 and 6.

The study in chapter 5 moved on to examine the effectiveness of play rapport in a mock forensic interview setting. This permitted assessment of how it would influence children’s recall of a previously experienced event, in an adult-child dynamic similar to the structure of an investigative interview. Additionally, in this chapter, play rapport was compared with the open style of rapport building currently used by UK practitioners (Home Office, 2007; Scottish Executive, 2011). A control condition was included where the children coloured in individually prior to the interview, and therefore did not engage in a rapport session with the interviewer. This gave an indication of whether both rapport techniques enhanced children’s communication. The decision was made to exclude adolescents from the age groups included in this study. This was based on the practitioners ‘comments that teenagers can, at times, find the rapport phase patronising, and they felt play was not an age appropriate way in which to first try and establish rapport with this age group.

From the findings of chapter 4 it was not possible to ascertain whether the communicative benefits were due to using play during collaboration or whether it was just the collaboration itself. However, in chapter 5, only the play, and not the open rapport, enhanced the children’s recall in comparison with the control condition. This indicates that the effects of play rapport therefore were not primarily due to the time the child spent interacting with the adult; otherwise the open style from chapter 5 would have produced information benefits also. This is an important finding as it suggests that it is the content of the interaction in the rapport phase which impacts upon children’s communication and not just the inclusion of a rapport phase overall.

The benefits of play rapport occurred for the older children only. They gave richer reports and more accurate information in total and in the free narrative phase after play rapport, than children in the control condition. Contrary to previous research the open style did not significantly differ from the control condition for any of the measures assessing detail or accuracy (Roberts et al., 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997). In chapter 1 it was proposed that the previous effects found for the open style may be attributed to a comparison with the direct style, as opposed to an appropriate control condition. The findings from chapter 5 lend support to this claim.

Nevertheless, no differences were found for information detail and accuracy between the open and play condition suggesting that play rapport is comparable with the current rapport protocol used by UK practitioners. The scores for play however were consistently greater overall. Previous literature has shown that interviewer provided support improves the elicitation of information from children (e.g. Goodman et al., 1991). It is possible that the support offered by play rapport is slightly better than that offered by open rapport, and this benefits the children’s communication. Open rapport is supportive to a certain extent, but not enough to cause differences between that and the control condition involving no support.

It was suggested in chapter 5 that the support offered by play may reduce children’s anxiety (Barnett & Storm, 1991), which subsequently enhanced their cognitive processing and ability to remember a previous event. This interpretation was not supported by the findings from chapter 6 where the anxiety levels of the children recorded from the different conditions in chapter 5 were analysed and compared. For both heart rate variability and self-reported anxiety, the children exhibited no differences across the conditions. The anxiety levels in this study however were low overall (Campbell & Rapee, 1996; Spielberger et al., 1973). It is acknowledged that anxiety reduction cannot account for the rapport effects found in this thesis, but that the impact of the rapport phase on anxiety may be different in real life child investigative interviews, and further research is required in order to offer definitive conclusions about the relationship between anxiety and rapport.

Differences were still found however, between play rapport and the control condition, and once again an alternative theoretical explanation was proposed to account for these findings. This centred on the idea that both open and play rapport scaffold children’s understanding about the communicative requirements of the interview. This theory would relate to the category of ‘understanding’ generated by the practitioners in chapter 3 where they stated that the rapport phase can set the tone for the remainder of the interview. The open rapport style may achieve this to a certain extent by giving children the opportunity to practise responding to the questioning style used in the substantive phase (Roberts et al., 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997). This also relates to the theory of meta-linguistic awareness, which focuses on children’s understanding about the level of information they are expected to contribute during the main part of the interview (e.g. Lamb & Brown, 2006).

Play rapport may also increase the children’s meta-linguistic awareness and subsequent communication. This could be achieved through the collaboration required to complete the play task where the child and interviewer may jointly construct the interactional style, as well as the actual task (Clark & Wilkes-Gibbs, 1986). Here the child has practise in contributing to the interaction and this once again may extend to the communication in the substantive phase of the interview. It must be emphasized however, that this interpretation is a suggestion at this stage and further research is required to explore the psychological underpinnings of these findings in more detail.

An important finding from chapter 5 in favour of play rapport was that children in this condition were more resistant to misleading suggestions than the children in the open condition. Previous research has found that children’s suggestibility is affected by anxiety (e.g. Almerigogna et al., 2007). It was therefore surprising to find in chapter 6 that no differences emerged between the play and open style of rapport building for this anxiety measure. Consequently, the differences in correct responses to misleading questions in favour of play were not due to play’s effects on the children’s anxiety. Once again the finding was interpreted with respect to the power dynamics between the interviewer and child. Adult ratings of the children’s confidence displayed a pattern in favour of play rapport. It is possible that the child’s contribution to the play task increased their confidence which balanced the power asymmetry. Davis and Bottoms (2002a, b) resistance efficacy theory proposes that social support empowers children and increases their ability to correct interviewers’ misinformation. Perhaps play therefore increased the children’s confidence and facilitated their resistance to suggestibility.

In summary, play rapport was found to enhance children’s recall of a previous event in an interview setting. It was equivalent in recall performance to the current method used by practitioners in the UK, apart from the benefit of increasing children’s resistance to suggestibility. At no point did the children in the open style of rapport building demonstrate improved communication in comparison with the control condition.

***Rapport building in forensic interviews***

The second aim of the research was to examine the communicative influence of the rapport building phase overall. As recently detailed, this thesis found evidence that play rapport positively influences information given by children. This provides support for claims of the rapport phase’s importance in practice guidelines (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011), but is in direct contrast to research that has found a negative relationship between the content of the rapport phase and the elicitation of children’s evidence (e.g. Teoh & Lamb, 2010). However, it is important to note that the previous research involved the open style of rapport. The findings presented in this thesis show that this style of rapport building had no effect on children’s communication. The discovery that only play rapport influenced children’s information indicates that it is not sufficient to simply include a rapport phase, but that the content and quality of the interaction is also important (Myklebust & Alison, 2010). Play rapport involves a rapport approach that is child centred and focuses on the social dynamic of the interaction between adults and children. As rapport building is arguably more of a socio-emotional construct than a cognitive one (Bernieri, 2005), it may be more appropriate to include a rapport phase that directly influences the social aspects of the interaction.

A further important finding from chapter 5 was that typical age effects evident in children’s memory performance only occurred when older children had participated in a rapport method prior to the substantive phase. In the control condition older children performed equivalently to the younger. The inclusion of a rapport phase therefore substantially improved the recall of older children. This is consistent with research showing that the positive effects of rapport building are especially marked in this age group (Hershkowitz, 2009). They may be more reactive to rapport building because they understand it’s social and communicative function (Hershkowitz, 2009). Failure to establish a relationship, prior to communication with an unfamiliar person, goes against the social norms of everyday interactions (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). This finding is consistent with the comments made by the practitioners from chapter 3 that respect is an important communication facilitator, with older children. They have a greater understanding of communicative conventions, and are therefore more responsive when treated appropriately by the investigative interviewer.

In contrast, the results presented in chapter 5 showed younger children’s recall did not benefit from the inclusion of a rapport phase. Research has previously suggested younger children have a limited attention span, and the requirements of a rapport phase, plus the substantive interview, are too demanding for their cognitive resources (Davies et al., 2000; Roberts et al., 2004). Nevertheless, play rapport building produced more detailed information from the youngest age group in chapter 4. As such, the author proposes that the bio pack may have interfered with the communication from the youngest age group in chapter 5, and resulted in a flat effect across the rapport conditions. Observation of the video clips showed the younger children frequently examined the wires attached to their wrists during recall, and some of the children asked when they would be removed. The effects of rapport building on younger children’s communication are therefore inconclusive, based on the evidence presented in the current thesis. The study from chapter 5 should be replicated without the use of the bio pack to investigate this issue further.

**7.3 Theoretical and practical implications**

This second section examines how the findings from this thesis relate to the wider knowledge of rapport building practice in child investigative interviewing. This includes how play rapport is an effective alternative method that could be used with children in this setting. It is essential to consider how the research from this thesis has broadened our understanding of the relationship between the rapport building phase and children’s communication in investigative interviews.

***Rapport building as a communicative facilitator***

In chapter 1 it was stated that much of the research in child forensic interviewing takes a Vygotskian approach to improving children’s communication. In his theory of the zone of proximal development, Vygotsky proposed that children’s cognitive performance can be enhanced, within reason, when they are provided with the appropriate support (1962). In investigative interviewing this support is provided by the interviewer in a variety of ways, e.g. the use of a developmentally appropriate questioning technique. The majority of the previous research focused upon how the support could be provided in the free narrative and questioning phases of the interview (Almerigogna et al., 2007; Carter et al., 1996; Goodman et al., 1991). The small number of investigations looking at the rapport building component produced mixed results, but were hampered by inappropriate control conditions (Roberts et al., 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997) or a reliance on correlational methods (Teoh& Lamb, 2010). The qualitative and experimental research presented in this thesis has shown that rapport practice, when conducted in a developmentally appropriate way, can also positively influence the production of children’s information and their resistance to suggestibility.

The findings from this thesis suggest the relationship between rapport and communication is complex. Its success is complicated by a number of individual differences (age, type of allegation, alleged perpetrator, gender) and socio-emotional factors (reluctance, understanding of the interview process, social development), as well as the methodology applied during the rapport phase. It is not sufficient to treat rapport building as a phased component that should be mechanically carried out to satisfy interview criteria. The quality of the interaction and the type of approach must be considered in order to use the rapport phase to its optimum ability.

Practical recommendations and training in the UK offer a small amount of guidance on rapport building approach and procedure (practitioners in chapter 3; Home Office, 2007, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). Based on the findings from this thesis interviewers must be made aware of the importance of the rapport phase and its communicative potential. Although many of the individual and socio-emotional factors require further exploration, interviewers should be given greater insight into how these aspects can influence the success of the interaction and the children’s communication. The rapport phase is short and is often overlooked as an important part of the interview. The aim of the thesis was not to overcomplicate a simple component of the interview procedure, but based on the findings, greater cognisance of its complexity and potential impact may positively influence rapport practice, and subsequently improve children’s communication throughout the interview.

***Play rapport as a potential rapport building technique***

Not only did this thesis examine the influence of rapport practice, but it also looked at the implementation of a new play method of rapport building. Based on the findings from this thesis it seems that collaborative play is an effective approach that could be used in the rapport phase to facilitate older children’s recall, and improve the suggestibility of children from all age groups. It enhanced the quantity and quality of children’s information, as well as decreasing suggestibility in comparison to the current method used by practitioners in the UK. Concerns were raised by the practitioners in chapter 3 about whether play would distract children’s attention during recall in the substantive phase. However, the improvements in the richness of children’s information, as a result of play rapport, contradict this claim. In fact, no disadvantages in communication were found as a result of the play method. The only consideration is that it may not be appropriate for adolescents. No differences were found across age groups for communication or interpersonal rapport in chapter 4. Nevertheless, given the comments made by the practitioners in chapter 3 that adolescents sometimes find the rapport phase patronising, it is possible that ‘play’ rapport may not be the best approach for engaging with these young people. This problem may be increased in real life interviews where young people are more sensitive about being treated appropriately and with respect given the often distressing nature of the information they are disclosing.

Consideration should now be given to the use of the open style of rapport building that is encouraged in the present UK child interview guidelines (Home Office, 2011; Scottish Executive, 2011). The findings from this thesis did not find any negative implications for the use of the open technique, but at the same time it did not produce any benefits for children’s communication. Therefore it still remains a suitable approach for assessing children’s level of cognitive and social functioning (Home Office, 2011). If the aim however, is to use the rapport phase to facilitate communication then it would appear that the open style is not effective. The additional method highlighted in UK guidelines is the use of a practise interview with children. Nevertheless, it is only briefly mentioned as an alternative and was not touched on at all by the practitioners in chapter 3. The practise interview was not investigated in the current thesis and therefore its efficacy with respect to children’s communication cannot be commented upon. Like the open style prior to this thesis however, it has not been assessed with the use of an appropriate control condition, and its effectiveness therefore has still to be empirically examined.

***Rapport building as a socio-emotional construct***

It is important to stress that this thesis is referring to the open style of questioning in the *rapport* phase and not the main *interview* phase. The author strongly advocates the use of open questions when eliciting information from children about alleged criminal events. Numerous studies from the child forensic interviewing literature have demonstrated the cognitive and therefore communicative benefits of the open ended questioning technique (for a review see Lamb et al., 2011). The difference between the main interview and the rapport phase however, is that rapport building is primarily a *socio-emotional construct* that has implications for children’s *cognitive performance,* whereas the main interview is arguably more focused on *cognitive factors.* Many of the topics covered by the practitioners in chapter 3 touched on the socio-emotional aspects of the interaction, e.g. assessing reluctance, showing interest, engaging interest, increasing comfort, demonstrating respect etc. This may be the reason why play rapport produced significant benefits as it focuses more on the social dynamics between the interviewer and child. The underlying premise of play rapport was that it is a developmentally appropriate method of first initiating contact and communication with children. Play is a behaviour children are familiar with, and it may be easier for the interviewer to engage with children when using play as a communication tool. It is possibly a more child focused method for overcoming socio-emotional barriers, as it conducts the initial communication within a child appropriate framework.

Although the theoretical underpinnings of play rapport require further investigation, the interpretation of the findings in this thesis highlight that it targets the socio-emotional dynamic between interviewer and child. Collaboration on the play task permits the interviewer and child to work together. As previously mentioned, this may balance the power asymmetry that exists between adults and children, therefore increasing children’s empowerment and subsequent resistance to interviewer suggestion. In addition, increased contribution to the interaction sets the communicative tone for the remainder of the interview, and may enhance the children’s efforts when they are recalling information. Overall, it may be advantageous for interviewers to focus rapport approach on the socio-emotional dynamic that exists in early encounters with children. These considerations should be conveyed to practitioners in practice guidelines and particularly during training.

***Rapport building and training***

The findings from this thesis have also raised some interesting questions regarding how rapport should be taught to interviewers and the practical issues that could arise from this. In the qualitative interviews some of the more experienced practitioners expressed concern that rapport was viewed as a phased component of the interview and that they had lost sight of rapport’s interpersonal and communicative function. In the literature covered in chapter two, rapport was stripped back to its primary psychological purpose. Humans use rapport as a way to build a relationship and initiate/maintain communication (e.g. Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1991). Nevertheless, rapport building is seldom taught this way to practitioners and is not framed this way in practice guidelines (Home Office, 1992, 2002, 2007, 2012; Scottish Executive, 2003, 2011). This may also account for the reasons why the rapport phase is rated so poorly in investigative interviews (e.g. Myklebust & Alison, 2000). The purpose of rapport as a construct used in everyday social discourse should be conveyed in the training materials. The functionality of rapport for initiating a relationship and its importance in eliciting communication needs to be emphasised.

Part of the problem may also be the idea that rapport is confined to the rapport phase at the start of the interview. This thesis focused on the impact of the ‘rapport phase’ in child investigative interviews but it is important to keep in mind that rapport is a construct that should be maintained throughout the interview. Perhaps rapport could be measured right through the rapport phase and the substantive interview to monitor how it relates to the initiation and maintenance of children’s communication. This is a perspective that should also be conveyed to practitioners in order that they are mindful of continuing rapport throughout their interaction with the child.

The consideration of rapport out with the ‘rapport phase’ is a matter that has recently been raised by lawyers and judicial professionals from the criminal justice system (Burrows & Powell, 2012). Many have expressed concern that juries tire when viewing the video record of the interview in court and that a lengthy rapport building phase may consume their attention levels before the jury has a chance to view the evidence from the substantive phase of the interview. The recent ABE guidelines therefore place more of an emphasis than previous guidelines on the possibilities of building rapport with children prior to the more ‘formal’ aspects of the interview. For example, rapport could be attempted when first meeting the child, when driving them to or showing them around the interview suite, during assessment etc. The record of the rapport building is then taken with verbatim notes by the interviewer.

This approach is perhaps more in line with the idea of rapport as a naturalistic behaviour that unfolds spontaneously when first meeting someone. However, the findings from this thesis have demonstrated the importance of rapport building in the rapport phase and the overwhelming benefits it can have for the richness and accuracy of children’s accounts, and their increased resistance to suggestibility. As this is the first time that the rapport phase has been (arguably) appropriately examined then it is likely that these professionals are not yet aware of its potential effects. It is possible that one form is more appropriate in some circumstances than others, e.g. the less formal may be sufficient for children who are ready to communicate and a phased version more suitable for children who are reluctant. This issue has to be considered further in future research in order to more adequately address appropriate rapport approach in line with children’s individual differences. In addition, this would help educate lawyers and judges on the influence of rapport building/the rapport phase on children’s communication in the interview.

Another important aspect to consider when deciding how to conduct training on rapport are the existing interpersonal capabilities of each individual interviewer. Individual differences exist across people with regards to their ability to initiate rapport (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Some interviewers may require more training than others. The research conducted in this thesis may offer some guidance. Play rapport for example could be a tool used by practitioners who struggle more with rapport building as this increases communication and expressivity with children. Nevertheless, interviewing children is a skill carried out at tier three of investigative interviewing and most practitioners should have considerable experience in interviewing by this stage. The focus instead could be on particular indicators of rapport to look out for with the children e.g. expressivity, mutual attention (Bernieri et al, 1996). The model derived in chapter three could also be incorporated in training to increase the practitioners understanding about the usefulness of the rapport phase, e.g. for engaging the child’s interest, assessing their willingness, increasing understanding, conveying respect etc. Perhaps the focus in training should instead be on increasing practitioners’ awareness of the communicative function of rapport and its potential as a tool for the remainder of the interview.

The final practical factor to consider is whether or not rapport has any negative impact on the interview. There is sometimes a concern among practitioners about making the interview too informal and some academics have stated that this may negatively influence children’s suggestibility (Moston & Engleberg, 1992). This criticism however has tended to be directed towards social support, but due to the obvious link between this and rapport then the same concern could be applicable. The findings from this thesis however, have demonstrated the opposite effect and the rapport phase seems to increase children’s resistance to misinformation. Once again practitioners and other professionals working in the criminal justice system must be educated on these new developments to ensure that rapport approach is being assessed from the perspective of evidence based practice.

**7.4 Future research**

The experimental studies conducted in this thesis were carried out in laboratory settings. This was necessary as it would not be ethical to practise new techniques in real child investigative interviews without some prior understanding of their effects. Now that we are aware that play rapport produces significant benefits for older children’s recall, and the suggestibility of children from both younger and older age groups, it would be useful to examine its impact on children’s communication in real investigative interviews. Workshops would have to be offered to the various police and social service agencies to educate interviewers about the theoretical underpinnings of the technique. This would be followed by practical sessions focused on how it is implemented with children from different age groups. It is a fairly simple method of building rapport, but it would be worthwhile for interviewers to become accustomed to why and how it could be used.

Further studies comparing its use with the open protocol and even the practise interview would permit an evaluation of its effectiveness. This would also allow further comparison of the three different approaches to examine which is most successful at facilitating children’s communication. Given the concerns raised by the practitioners in chapter 3 about the possibility that play could be used as a barrier to communication, examination of its use with reluctant children would also be beneficial.

Continuing with the theme of rapport building as a communication tool, it would also be useful to examine whether play rapport produced particular benefits for interviewers who struggle with or are uncomfortable with the rapport building phase. It may facilitate the initial interaction and overcome any reticence on the part of the interviewer or the child. In addition, Hershkowitz (2009) found social support in the rapport phase was particularly advantageous when interviewing children who were initially less talkative in an investigative interview. Participation in a play task with the interviewer may encourage the engagement of these children and their subsequent communication.

Given the mixed pattern of results with younger children in this thesis, and the concern that a long rapport phase places excessive demands on their cognitive resources, the study in chapter 5 should be replicated with 5-7 year old children. The author suggested that the bio pack interfered with the recall of this age group, and further comparison of play and open rapport with a control condition would allow a more accurate examination of the communicative impact of rapport building with these children.

Age differences in children’s responsiveness to rapport building were found in the experimental findings and suggested by the practitioners in this thesis. Previous research looking at the relationship between the rapport phase and children’s communication has primarily focused on the information from children as opposed to adolescents. The suggestion that older children do not like the rapport phase, and that this is influenced by their level of social development, requires further investigation. Perhaps teenagers involved in laboratory and real life interviews could be asked about their perceptions of rapport building, and how this influenced their motivation to communicate. If responses were negative then further research could look at the communicative impact of shortening or excluding the rapport phase with these children.

The categories raised by the practitioners in chapter 3 require further consideration. The children’s understanding of the interview process was mentioned and continued in the evaluation of the findings in chapter 6. Prior to the interview it would be worthwhile to administer to children a brief questionnaire to assess their understanding of the process to see if this influences their communication. In addition, understanding could be assessed again after the rapport phase to see whether rapport building impacted upon this.

With respect to the category of ‘engagement’ the level of the child’s engagement during rapport could be measured by their verbal contribution and e.g. their eye gaze during the rapport phase. Previous research has looked at the relationship between the interviewer’s verbal input in the rapport phase and the child’s recall in the substantive phase (Hershkowitz, 2009; Teoh & Lamb, 2010). A focus on the child’s level of engagement, and whether this varies across rapport protocols, would offer further insight into the effectiveness of the rapport building phase.

Finally, the theoretical underpinnings of rapport practice in investigative interviews have been discussed extensively in this thesis. There is still however, much work to be done to gain a full understanding of the psychological mechanisms involved. The balancing of the power asymmetry between the interviewer and the child has been a recurring theme, especially with regards to play rapport. Perhaps verbal and non-verbal indicators of power (e.g. quantity of verbal input, body posture, and gaze behaviours) could be recorded throughout the rapport phase to investigate whether these change across the course of the interaction and between the different rapport conditions. In addition, the level of task contribution made by the interviewer could be varied, to investigate whether it is the level of task input that mediates the power and influences children’s motivation to communicate.

**7.5 Conclusions**

The findings presented in this thesis have made a significant contribution to our understanding about the relationship between the rapport phase and children’s communication in investigative interviews. The comments made by the practitioners and the theory generated showed that the rapport phase is used as a tool to facilitate communication with children. The processes involved when aiming to achieve this however, are far more complicated than initially thought. The practitioners highlighted a number of factors that could impact upon children’s responsiveness to rapport building and these require further research in order to be validated.

The experimental findings supported the idea that the rapport phase facilitates communication, but this occurred only with older children and was attributed to their understanding of the social etiquette of communicative interactions. Finally, a new play approach to rapport building was investigated and found to produce communication benefits for older children, and increased resistance to suggestibility for children of all ages. It was equally as effective, in terms of recall, as the current protocol used in the rapport phase by UK practitioners, but the children who engaged in play rapport where more likely to respond correctly to misleading questions. Attempts were made to understand the psychological underpinnings of these effects, but there is clearly much research still to be done. Nevertheless, the findings from this thesis are a step in the right direction in terms of highlighting the importance of the rapport phase, and demonstrating that greater consideration of rapport approach may produce benefits for the facilitation of children’s communication in this setting.

**Chapter Eight**

**References**

Almerigogna, J., Ost, J., Bull, R., & Akehurst, L. (2007). A state of high anxiety: How non-supportive interviewers can increase the suggestibility of child witnesses. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 21,* 963-974.

Ackil, J. K., & Zaragoza, M.S. (1995). Developmental differences in eyewitness suggestibility and memory for source. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 60,* 57-83.

Akehurst, L., Milne, R., & Kohnken, G. (2003). The effects of children’s age and delay on recall in a cognitive structured interview. *Psychology, Crime & Law, 9,* 97-107.

Argyle, M. (1996). *Bodily Communication.* London, England: Routledge.

Argyle, M., & Dean, J. (1965). Eye contact, distance and affiliation. *Sociometry, 28,* 289-304.

Baker-Ward, L., Gordon, B, N., Ornstein, P.A., Larus, D., & Clubb, P.A. (1993).Young children’s long-term retention of a paediatric examination. *Child Development, 64,* 1519-1533.

Bandura, A. (1982). Self-efficacy mechanism in human agency. *American Psychologist, 37,* 122-147.

Barnett, L.A., & Storm, B. (1991). Play, pleasure, and pain: The reduction of anxiety through play. *Leisure Sciences, 4,* 161-175.

Beidel, D.C (1988). Psychophysiological assessment of anxious emotional states in children. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 97,* 80-82.

Benson, T.A., Cohen, A.L., & Buskist, W. (2005). Rapport: Its relation to student attitudes and behaviours toward teachers and classes. *Teaching Psychology*, *2*, 37-239.

Bergen, D. (1988). Stages of play development. In D. Bergen (Ed.), *Play as a medium for learning and development: A handbook of theory and practice* (pp. 71-94). Portsmouth, UK: Heinemann.

Bernieri, F.J. (2005). The expression of rapport. In V. Manusov. (Ed.), *The sourcebook of nonverbal measures: Going beyond words* (pp. 347-361). London, England: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bernieri, F.J., Davis, J.M., Rosenthal, R., & Knee, C. (1994). Interactional synchrony and rapport: Measuring synchrony in displays devoid of sound and facial affect. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 20,* 303-311.

Bernieri, F.J., Gillis, J.S., Davis, J.M., & Grahe, J.E. (1996). Dyad rapport and the accuracy of its judgement across situations: A lens model analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71*, 110-129.

Broadhead, P., Howard, J., & Wood, E. (2010). *Play and learning in the early years: From research to practice.* London, England: Sage.

Brown, D.A., & Pipe, M.E. (2003a). Individual differences in children’s event memory reports and the narrative elaboration technique. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88,* 195-206.

Brown, D.A., & Pipe, M.E. (2003b). Variations on a technique: Enhancing children’s recall using narrative elaboration training. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 17,* 377-399.

Bruck, M., & Ceci, S.J. (1999). The suggestibility of children’s memory. *Annual Review of Psychology, 50,* 419-439.

Burlseon, B.R. (1982). The development of comforting communication skills in childhood and adolescence. *Child Development, 53,* 1578-1588.

Burrows, K., & Powell, M. (May, 2012). Prosecutors’ recommendations for improving child witness statements about sexual abuse. Unpublished paper presented at The 5th Annual Conference of the International Investigative Interviewing Research Group, Toronto, Canada.

Butler, S., Gross, J., & Hayne, H. (1995). The effect of drawing on memory performance in young children. *Developmental Psychology, 31,* 597-608.

Campbell, M.A., & Rapee, R.M. (1996). Current issues in the assessment of anxiety in children and adolescents: A developmental perspective. *Behaviour Change, 13,* 185-193.

Carroll, J.J., & Steward, M.S. (1984). The role of cognitive development in children’s understandings of their own feelings. *Cognitive Development, 55,* 1486-1492.

Carter, C.A., Bottoms, B.L. & Levine, M. (1996). Linguistic and socioemotional influences on the accuracy of children’s reports. *Law and Human Behavior, 20,* 335-358.

Ceci, S.J., & Bruck, M. (1993). Suggestibility of the child witness: A historical review and synthesis. *Psychological Bulletin, 113,* 403-439.

Ceci, S.J., Ross, D.E. & Toglia, M.P. (1987). Suggestibility of children’s memory: Psycholegal issues. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 116,* 38-49.

Chethik, M. (2002). The play relationship and the therapeutic alliance. *Psychoanalytic Social Work, 8,* 9-20.

Christie, J.F., & Johnsen, P.E. (1987). Reconceptualising constructive play: A review of the empirical literature. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 33,* 439-452.

Clark, H.H., & Wilkes-Gibbs, D. (1986). Referring as a collaborative process. *Cognition, 22,* 1-39.

Clarke, C., & Milne, R. (2001). *National evaluation of the PEACE investigative interviewing course.* Report n: PRAS/149. London: The Home Office.

Cohen, S., & Wills, T. (1985). Stress, social support, and the buffering hypothesis. *Psychological Bulletin, 98,* 310-357.

Collins, R., Lincoln, R., & Frank, M.G. (2002). The effect of rapport on forensic interviewing. *Psychiatry, Psychology & Law, 9,* 69-78.

Cox, M.V. (1992). *Children’s drawings.* London, England: Penguin Books.

Dalton, J.E. (1983). Sex differences in communication skills as measured by a modified relationship inventory. *Sex Roles, 9,* 195-204.

Dando, C., Wilcock, R., & Milne, R. (2009). The cognitive interview: The efficacy of a modified mental reinstatement of context procedure for frontline police investigators. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 23,* 138-147.

Davies, G.M., Westcott, H.L., & Horan, N. (2000). The impact of questioning style on the content of investigative interviews with suspected child sexual abuse victims. *Psychology, Crime & Law, 6,* 81-97.

Davies, G., Wilson, C., Mitchell, R., & Milsom, J. (1995). *Videotaping children’s evidence: An evaluation.* London: Home Office.

Davis, A.M. (1983). Contextual sensitivity in young children’s drawings. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 35,* 478-486.

Davis, SL., & Bottoms, B.L. (2002a). The effects of social support on the accuracy of children’s reports: Implications for the forensic interview. In M.L. Eisen., J.A. Quas., & G.S. Goodman (Eds.), *Memory and suggestibility in the forensic interview* (pp. 29-63). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Davis, S. L., & Bottoms, B. L. (2002b). Effects of social support on children’s eyewitness reports: A test of the underlying mechanism. *Law and Human Behavior, 26,* 185–215.

Davy, A., & Gallagher, J. (2006). *New Playwork: Play and care for children 4-16.* London, England: Thomson Learning.

DeLoache, J. S. (2000). Dual representation and young children’s use of scale models. *Child Development, 71,* 329-338.

DeLoache, J.S., & Marzolf, D.P. (1995). The use of dolls to interview young children: Issues of symbolic representation, *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 60,* 155-173.

Dent, H.R., & Stephenson, G.M. (1979). An experimental study of the effectiveness of different techniques of questioning child witnesses. *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 18,* 41-51.

De Wolff, M., Van Ijzendoorn, M.H. (1997). Sensitivity and attachment: A meta-analysis on parental antecedents of infant attachment. *Child Development, 68,* 571-591.

Dietze, P. M., & Thomson, D. M. (1993). Mental reinstatement of context: A technique for interviewing child witnesses. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, *7*, 97–108.

Dietze, P.M., Powell, M.B., & Thomson, D.M. (2010). Mental reinstatement of context with child witnesses: Does it matter whether context is reinstated ‘out loud’? Psychology, Crime and Law, 16, 439-448.

Di Gregorio, S. (2003, May). Analysis as cycling: Shifting between coding and memoing in using qualitative software. Paper presented at the Institute of Education, London, England.

Dixon, D., Pollard, B., & Johnston, M. (2007). What does the chronic pain grade questionnaire measure? Pain, 130, 249-253.

Doherty-Sneddon, G. (2003). *Children’s unspoken language.* London, England: Jessica Kingsley.

Doherty-Sneddon, G., Bruce, V., Bonner, L., Longbotham, S., & Doyle, C. (2002). Development of gaze aversion as disengagement from visual information. *Developmental Psychology, 38,* 438-445.

Doherty-Sneddon, G., & McAuley, S. (2000). Influence of video-mediation on adult-child interviews: Implications for the use of the live link with child witnesses. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 14*, 379-392.

Dorado, J.S., & Saywitz, K.J. (2001). Interviewing pre-schoolers from low and middle SES communities: A test of the narrative elaboration recall improvement technique. *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology, 30,* 566-578.

Dunn, J. (1988). *The beginnings of social understanding.* Oxford, England: Blackwell.

Eberts, E.H., & Lepper, M.R. (1975). Individual consistency in the proxemic behaviour of preschool children. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 23,* 283-292.

Everson, M.D., & Boat, B.W. (1997). Anatomical dolls in child sexual abuse assessments: A call for forensically relevant research. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 11,* 55-74.

Eysenck, M.W. (1992). *Anxiety: The cognitive perspective.* Hove, England: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Eysenck, M.W., & Calvo, M. (1992). Anxiety and performance: The processing efficiency theory. *Cognition and Emotion, 6,* 409-434.

Farber, I.E., & Spence, K.W. (1953). Complex learning and conditioning as a function of anxiety. *Journal of Experimental Psychology, 46,* 120-125.

Fein, G. G. (1986). Pretend play: Creativity and consciousness. In D. Gorlitz & J. F. Wohlwill (Eds.), *Curiosity, Imagination and Play.* (pp. 281-305). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Flin, R., Boon, J., Knox, A., & Bull, R. (1992). The effect of a five-month delay on children’s and adults’ eyewitness memory. *British Journal of Psychology, 83*, 323-336.

Garven, S., Wood, J.M., Malpass, R.S., & Shaw, J.S. (1998). More than suggestion: The effect of interviewing techniques from the McMartin preschool case. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 83,* 347-359.

Geiselman, R.E., & Padilla, J. (1988). Cognitive interviewing with child witnesses. *Journal of Police Science and Administration, 16,* 236-242.

Gilmour, L., Collins, C., Mackie, W., Cross, R., Holmes, A., & Weber, P. (Eds.). (2002). *Collins Paperback Dictionary & Thesaurus.* Glasgow, Scotland: Harper Collins.

Grahe, J.E., & Bernieri, F.J. (1999). The importance of nonverbal cues in judging rapport. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, 23,* 253-269.

Grahe, J.E., & Sherman, R.A. (2007). An ecological examination of rapport using a dyadic puzzle. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 147,* 453-475.

Greenhoot, A.F. (2000). Remembering and understanding: The effects of changes in underlying knowledge on children’s recollections. *Child Development, 71,* 1309-1328.

Greenstock, J. & Pipe, M.E. (1996). Interviewing children about past events: The influence of peer support and misleading questions. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 20,* 69-80.

Greenstock, J., & Pipe, M.E. (1997). Are two heads better than one? Peer support and children’s eyewitness reports. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 11,* 461-483.

Gooch, D. (1999). *Distance, intimacy and compliance: An investigation of compensation behaviours in pre-school children* (Unpublished undergraduate dissertation). University of Stirling, Stirling.

Goodman, G.S., Bottoms, B.L., Schwartz-Kenney, B.M., & Rudy, L. (1991). Children’s testimony about a stressful event: Improving children’s reports. *Journal of Narrative and Life History, 1,* 69-99.

Goodman, G.S., & Reed, D.S. (1986). Age differences in eyewitness testimony. *Law and Human Behavior, 10,* 317-332.

Goodman-Brown, T.B., Edelstein, R.S., Goodman, G.S., Jones, D.P.H., & Gordon, D.S. (2003). Why children tell: a model of children’s disclosure of sexual abuse. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 27,* 525-540.

Gudjonsson, G.H. (1984). A new scale of interrogative suggestibility. *Personality and Individual Differences, 5,* 303-314.

Gudjonsson, G.H. (1988). Interrogative suggestibility: Its relationship with assertiveness, social-evaluative anxiety, state anxiety and method of coping. *British Journal of Clinical Psychology, 27,* 159-166.

Gudjonsson, G.H. (2003). *The psychology of interrogations and confessions: A handbook.* Chichester, England: Wiley.

Hammersley, M. (1997). The relationship between qualitative and quantitative research: Paradigm loyalty versus methodological eclecticism. In J.T.E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods* (pp. 159-175)*.* Leicester, England: BPS Books.

Hershkowitz, I. (2009). Socioemotional factors in child sexual abuse investigations. *Child Maltreatment*, *14,* 172-181.

Hershkowitz, I., Horowitz, D., & Lamb, M.E. (2005). Trends in children’s disclosure of abuse in Israel: A national study. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 29,* 1203-1214.

Hershkowitz, I., Orbach, Y., Lamb, M.E., Sternberg, K.J., & Horowitz, D. (2006). Dynamics of forensic interviews with suspected abuse victims who do not disclose abuse. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 30,* 753-769.

Holloway, I., & Wheeler, S. (2002). *Qualitative research in nursing and healthcare.* Chichester, England: Wiley.

Holmberg, U. (2009). Investigative interviewing as a therapeutic jurisprudential approach. In T. Williamson, B. Milne & P Savage (Eds.), *International developments in investigative interviewing* (pp. 149-175). Devon, England: Willan Publishing.

Home Office. (1992). *Memorandum of good practice on video recorded interviews with child witnesses for criminal proceedings*. London, England: Author.

Home Office. (2002). *Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance for Vulnerable or Intimidated Witnesses, Including Children.* London, England: Author.

Home Office. (2007). *Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings: Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and using special measures.* London, England: Author.

Home Office. (2011). *Achieving best evidence in criminal proceedings: Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures.* London, England: Author.

Howe, P.A., & Silvern, L.E. (1981). Behavioral observation of children during play therapy: Preliminary development of a research instrument. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 45,* 168-182.

Howie, P., Kurukulasuriya, N., Nash, L., & Marsh, A. (2009). Inconsistencies in children’s recall of witnesses events: The role of age, question format and perceived reason for question repetition. *Legal and Criminological Psychology, 14,* 311-329.

Hubbard, J.A., Parker, E.H., Ramsden, S.R., Flanagan, K.D., Relyea, N., Dearing, K.F., …Hyde, C.T. (2004). The relations among observational, physiological, and self-report measures of children’s anger. *Social Development, 13,* 14-39.

Hudak, D. (2000). The therapeutic use of ball play in psychotherapy with children. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 9, 1-10.

Hunt, J.S., & Borgida, E. (2001). Is that what I said? Witnesses’ responses to interviewer modifications. *Law and Human Behavior, 25,* 583-603.

Izard, C.E. (1990). Personality, emotion expressions, and rapport. *Psychological Inquiry, 1,* 315-317.

Johnston, L. (2006). Software and method: Reflections on teaching and using QSR NVivo in doctoral research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 9,* 378-391.

Kebbell, M.R., Milne, R., & Wagstaff, G.F. (1999). The cognitive interview: A survey of its forensic effectiveness. *Psychology, Crime and Law, 5,* 101-115.

King, E. (1997). The use of the self in qualitative research. In J.T.E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods* (pp. 159-175)*.* Leicester, England: BPS Books.

Klimstra, T.A., Hale III, W.W., Raaijmakers, Q.A.W., Branje, S.J.T., & Meeus, W.H.J. (2010). Identity formation in adolescence: Change or Stability? *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 39,* 150-162.

Krauss, R.M., Chen, Y., & Chawla, P. (1996). Nonverbal behaviour and nonverbal communication: What do conversational hand gestures tell us? *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 28,* 389-450.

Lamb, M.E., & Brown, D.A. (2006). Conversational apprentices: Helping children become competent informants about their own experiences. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 24,* 215-234.

Lamb, M.E., Hershkowitz, I., Orbach, Y., & Esplin, P.W. (2011). *Tell me what happened: Structured investigative interviews of child victims and witnesses.* Chichester, England: Wiley.

Lamb, M.E., Sternberg, K.J., & Esplin, P.W. (2000). Effect of age and length of delay on the amount of information provided by alleged abuse victims in investigative interviews. *Child Development, 71,* 1586-1596.

La Rooy, D., Lamb., M.E., & Memon, A. (2010). Forensic interviews with children in Scotland: A survey of interview practice among police. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *26,* 26-34.

La Rooy, D., Pipe, M.E., & Murray, J.E. (2007). Enhancing children’s event recall after long delays. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 21,* 1-17.

Law Commission. (1997). *The evidence of children and other vulnerable witnesses.* Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Lawson, L., & Chaffin, M. (1992). False negatives in sexual abuse disclosure interviews. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 9,* 307-326.

Lifter, K., Foster-Sanada, S., Arzamarski, C., Briesch, J., & McClure, E. (2011). Overview of play: Its uses and importance in early intervention/early childhood special education. *Infants & Young Children, 24,* 225-245.

Loftus, E.F., & Davies, G.M. (1984). Distortions in the memory of children. *Journal of Social Issues, 40,* 51-68.

Malloy, L.C., Brubacher, S.P., & Lamb, M.E. (2011). Expected consequences of disclosure revealed in investigative interviews with suspected victims of child sexual abuse. *Applied Developmental Science, 15,* 8-19.

Malloy, A., McKay, K., Salmon, K., & Pipe, M-E. (2010). *Do dolls and human figure diagrams increase the effectiveness of a protocol-guided interview in eliciting touch reports from young children?* Manuscript submitted for publication.

Marche, T.A. (1999). Memory trace strength affects reporting misinformation. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 73,* 45-71.

McCauley, M.R., & Fisher, R.P. (1995). Facilitating children’s eyewitness recall with the revised cognitive interview. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 80,* 510-516.

McLaughlin, D.M., & Carr, E.G. (2005). Quality of rapport as a setting for problem behavior: Assessment and intervention. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 7,* 68-91.

Meltzoff, A.N. (1988). Infant imitation after a one week delay: Long term memory for novel acts and multiple stimuli. *Developmental Psychology, 24,* 470-476.

Meeus, W., Van De Schoot, R., Keijsers, L., Schwartz, S.J., & Branje, S. (2010). On the progression and stability of adolescent identity formation: A five-wave longitudinal study in early-to-middle and middle-to-late adolescence. *Child Development, 81,* 1565-1581.

Merritt, K.A., Ornstein, P.A., & Spicker, B. (1994). Children’s memory for a salient medical procedure: Implications for testimony. *Pediatrics, 94,* 17-23.

Mian, M., Wehrspann, W., Kalijner-Diamond, H., LeBaron, D., & Winder, J. (1986). Review of 125 children 6 years and under who were sexually abused. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 10,* 223-229.

Milne, R., & Bull, R. (1999). *Investigative interviewing: Psychology and practice.* Chichester, England: Wiley.

Milne, R., & Bull, R. (2006). Interviewing victims of crime, including children and people with intellectual disabilities. In M. Kebbell., & G. Davies (Eds.), *Practical psychology for forensic investigations* (pp.72-101). Chichester, England: Wiley.

Moston, S., & Engleberg, T. (1992). The effects of social support on children’s eyewitness testimony. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 6,* 61-75.

Moston, S., & Engleberg, T. (1993). Police questioning techniques in tape recorded interviews with criminal suspects. *Policing and Society, 3,* 101-115.

Myklebust, T., & Alison, L. (2000). The current state of police interviews with children in Norway: How discrepant are they from models based on current issues in memory and communication? *Psychology, Crime & Law, 6,* 331-351.

Nathanson, R., Crank, J.N., Saywitz, K.J., & Ruegg, E. (2007). Enhancing the oral narratives of children with learning disabilities. *Reading & Writing Quarterly, 23,* 315-331.

Nathanson, R. & Saywitz, K.J. (2003). The effects of the courtroom context on children’s memory and anxiety. *The Journal of Psychiatry & Law, 31,* 67-98.

Oates, K., & Shrimpton, S. (1991). Children’s memories for stressful and non-stressful events. *Medical Science & Law, 31,* 4-10.

O’Neill, D.K., & Gopnick, A. (1991).Young children’s ability to identify the sources of their beliefs. *Developmental Psychology, 27,* 390-397.

Orbach, Y., & Lamb, M.E. (2000). Enhancing children’s narratives in investigative interviews. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 24*, 1631-1648.

Orbach, Y., & Lamb, M.E. (2001). The relationship between within-interview contradictions and eliciting interviewer utterances. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 25,* 323-333.

Orbach, Y., Hershkowitz, I., Lamb, M. E., Sternberg, K. J., Esplin, P.W., & Horowitz, D. (2000). Assessing the value of structured protocols for forensic interviews of alleged abuse victims. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *24*, 733–752.

Ornstein, P.A. (1995). Children’s long term retention of salient personal experiences. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 8,* 581-605.

Ornstein, P.A., Gordon, B.T., & Larus, D.M. (1992). Children’s memory for a personally experienced event: Implications for testimony. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, *6,*49-60.

Ornstein, P.A., & Haden, C.A. (2002). The development of memory: Toward an understanding of children’s testimony. In M.L. Eisen., J.A. Quas., & G.S. Goodman (Eds.), *Memory and suggestibility in the forensic interview* (pp. 29-63). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ornstein, P.A., Merritt, K.A., Baker-Ward, L., Furtardo, E., Gordon, B.N., & Principe, G.G. (1998).Children’s knowledge, expectation, and long-term retention. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 12,* 387-405.

Payne, S. (2007). Grounded theory. In E. Lyons, & A. Coyle (Eds.), *Analysing qualitative data in psychology* (pp. 65-86). London, England: Sage.

Parten, M.B. (1932). Social participation among preschool children. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 27,* 243-269.

Piaget, J. (1962). *Play, dreams and imitation in childhood.* New York: Norton.

Pidgeon, N. (1997). Grounded theory: Theoretical background. In J.T.E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods* (pp. 159-175)*.* Leicester, England: BPS Books.

Philippot, P., & Feldman, R.S. (1990). Age and social competence in pre-schoolers’ decoding of facial expression. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 29,* 43-54.

Phillips, R.D. (1985). Whistling in the dark: A review of play therapy research. *Psychotherapy, 22,* 752-760.

Pipe, M.E., Lamb, M.E., Orbach, Y., & Cederborg, A. C. (2007). *Child sexual abuse: Disclosure, delay and denial.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Poole, D., Bruck, M., & Pipe, M. (2011). Forensic interviewing aids: Do props help children answer questions about touching? *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 20,* 11-15.

Poole, D., & White, L. (1993). Two years later: Effects of question repetition and retention interval on the eyewitness testimony of children and adults. *Developmental Psychology, 29,* 844-853.

Puccinelli, N.M., Tickle-Degnen, L., & Rosenthal, R. (2003). Effect of dyadic context on judgements of rapport: Dyad task and partner presence. *Journal of Nonverbal Behaviour, 27,* 211-236.

Quas, J.A., & Lench, H.C. (2006). Arousal at encoding, arousal at retrieval, interviewer support, and children’s memory for a mild stressor. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 19,* 1-17.

Richardson, J.T.E. (1997). Introduction. In J.T.E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods* (pp. 159-175)*.* Leicester, England: BPS Books.

Roberts, K.P., & Blades, M. (1998). The effects of interacting in repeated events on children’s eyewitness memory and source monitoring. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 12,* 489-503.

Roberts, K.P., Lamb, M.E., & Sternberg, K.J. (2004). The effects of rapport-building style on children’s reports of a staged event. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 18*, 189-202.

Roediger, H.L., & Gallo, D.A. (2002). Processes affecting accuracy and distortion in memory: An overview. In M.L. Eisen., J.A. Quas., & G.S. Goodman (Eds.), *Memory and suggestibility in the forensic interview* (pp. 29-63). Mawhaw, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Rotenberg, K.J., Eisenberg, N., Cumming, C., Smith, A., Singh, M., & Terlicher, E. (2003). The contribution of adults’ nonverbal cues and children’s shyness to the development of rapport between adults and preschool children. *International Journal of Behavioral Development, 27,* 21-30.

Rubin, K.H., Bukowski, W., & Parker, J.G. (1998). Peer interactions, relationships, and groups. In N. Eisenberg (Ed.), *Handbook of child psychology, Vol 3: Social, emotional, and personality development* (pp. 619-700). New York: Wiley.

Sarason, I.G., & Sarason, B.R. (1986). Experimentally provided social support. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 50,* 1222-1225.

Saywitz, K.J. (1989). Children’s conceptions of the legal system: Court is a play to play basketball. In S. Ceci, M. Toglia & D. Ross. (Eds.), *Perspectives on children’s testimony* (pp. 131-157). New York: Springer-Verlag.

Saywitz, K.J. (2002). Developmental underpinnings of children’s testimony. In H.L Westcott., G.M. Davies., & R.H.C. Bull (Eds.), *Children’s testimony: A handbook of psychological research and forensic practice* (pp. 3-21). West Sussex, England: Wiley.

Saywitz, K.J., & Geiselman, E. (1998). Interviewing the child witness: Maximising completeness and minimizing error. In S. Lynn & K. McConkey (Eds.), *Truth in memory* (pp. 190-223). New York: Guilford.

Saywitz, K.J., Geiselman, R.E., & Bornstein, G. (1992). Effects of cognitive interviewing and practice on children’s recall performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 77,* 744-756.

Saywitz, K.J., Goodman, G.S., Nicholas, E., & Moan, S. (1991). Children’s memories of a physical examination involving genital touch: Implications for reports of child sexual abuse. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 59,* 682-691.

Saywitz, K.J., & Lyon, T.D. (2002). Coming to grips with children’s suggestibility. In M.L Eisen, J.A. Quas, & G.S. Goodman (Eds.), *Memory and suggestibility in the forensic interview* (pp. 85-113). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Saywitz, K.J., & Synder, L. (1996). Narrative elaboration: Test of a new procedure for interviewing children. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 64,* 1347-1357.

Schunk, D.H. (1991). Self-efficacy and academic motivation. *Educational Psychologist, 26,* 207-231.

Scottish Executive.(2003). *Guidance for interviewing child witnesses and victims in Scotland*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Author.

Scottish Executive.(2011). *Guidance on joint investigative interviewing of child witnesses in Scotland*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Author.

Smith, J.A. (1997). Evolving issues for qualitative psychology. In J.T.E. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods* (pp. 159-175)*.* Leicester, England: BPS Books.

Souza-Poza, J.F., & Rohrberg, R. (1972). Body movement in relation to the types of information (Person- and Non-person oriented) and cognitive style (field dependence). *Human Communication Research, 4,* 19-29.

Spielberger, C.D., Edwards, C.D., Lushene, R., Montuori, J., & Platzek, D. (1973). *STAI-C preliminary manual for the state-trait anxiety inventory for children.* Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Sternberg, K.J., Lamb, M.E., Esplin, P.W., Orbach, Y., & Hershkowitz, I. (2002). Using a structured protocol to improve the quality of investigative interviews. In M.L. Eisen., J.A. Quas., & G.S. Goodman (Eds.), *Memory and suggestibility in the forensic interview* (pp. 409-436). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Sternberg, K.J., Lamb, M.E., Hershkowitz, I., Yudilevitch, L., Orbach, Y., Esplin, P.W., & Hovav, M. (1997). Effects of introductory style on children’s abilities to describe experiences of sexual abuse. *Child Abuse and Neglect, 21*, 1133-1146.

Sternberg, K.J., Lamb, M.E., Orbach, Y., Esplin, P.W., & Mitchell, S. (2001). Use of a structured investigative protocol enhances young children’s responses to free recall prompts in the course of forensic interviews. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 86,* 997-1005.

Takhvav, M., & Smith, P.K. (1990). A review and critique of Smilansky’s classification scheme and the ‘nested hierarchy’ of play categories. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 4*, 112-122.

Teoh, Y-S., & Lamb, M.E. (2010). Preparing children for investigative interviews: Rapport building, instruction, and evaluation. *Applied Developmental Science, 14,* 154-163.

Teoh, Y-S., Yang, P-J., Lamb, M.E., & Larsson, A.S. (2010). Do human figure diagrams help alleged victims of sexual abuse provide elaborate and clear accounts of physical contact with alleged perpetrators? *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 24,* 287-300.

Thierry, K.L., Lamb, M.E., Orbach, Y., & Pipe, M-E.(2005). Developmental differences in the function and use of anatomical dolls during interviews with alleged sexual abuse victims. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 73,* 1125-1134.

Thompson, R., Proctor, L.J., Weisbart, C., Lewis, T.L., English, D.J., Hussey, J.M., & Runyan, D.K. (2007). Children’s self-reports about violence exposure: An examination of the things I have seen and heard scale. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 77,* 454-466.

Tickle-Degnen, L., & Rosenthal, R. (1987). Group rapport and nonverbal behavior. *Review of Personality and Social Psychology, 9,* 113-136.

Tickle-Degnen, L., & Rosenthal, R. (1990). The nature of rapport and its nonverbal correlates. *Psychological Inquiry, 1,* 285-293.

Tulving, E., & Thomson, D. M. (1973). Encoding specificity and retrieval processes in episodic memory. *Psychological Review, 5,* 352–373.

Vallano, J., Schreiber Compo, N., Wood, S., Perry, A., Lobos, A.M., Villalba, D… Cochran, J. (2008, March). *Rapport-building and susceptibility to misinformation in an investigative mock crime interview.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychology-Law Society, Florida.

Vanderhallen, M., Vervaeke, G., & Holmberg, U. (2011).Witness and suspect perceptions of working alliance and interviewing style. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling, 8,* 110-130.

Vygotsky, L. (1962). *Thought and language.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Wade, A., & Westcott, H. (1997). No easy answers: Children’s perspectives on investigative interviews. In H. Wescott & J. Jones (Eds.), *Perspectives on the memorandum. Policy, practice and research in investigative interviewing.* Aldershot, UK: Arena.

Walsh, D., & Bull, R. (2010). What really is effective in interviews with suspects? A study comparing interviewing skills against interviewing outcomes. *Legal and Criminological Psychology, 15,* 305-321.

Warren, A.R., Woodall, C.E., Hunt, J.S., & Perry, N.W. (1996). “It sounds good in theory, but…”: Do investigative interviewers follow guidelines based on memory research? *Child Maltreatment, 1,* 231-245.

Weitz, S. (1976). Sex differences in nonverbal communication. *Sex Roles, 2,* 175-184.

Westcott, H.L., & Davies, G.M. (1996). Sexually abused children’s and young people’s perspectives on investigative interviews. *British Journal of Social Work, 26*, 451-474.

Westcott, H.L. & Kynan, S. (2006). Interviewer practice in investigative interviews for suspected child sexual abuse, *Psychology, Crime & Law, 12,* 367-382.

White, J., & Allers, C.T. (1994). Play therapy with abused children: A review of the literature. *Journal of Counselling & Development, 72,* 390-394.

White, T.L., Leichtman, M.D., & Ceci, S.J. (1997). The good, the bad, and the ugly: Accuracy, inaccuracy, and elaboration in pre-schoolers’ reports about a past event. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 11,* 37-54.

Wood, J.M., McClure, K.A., & Birch, R.A. (1996). Suggestions for improving interviews in child protection agencies. *Child Maltreatment, 1,* 223-230.

Zevenbergen, A.A., & Ryan, M.M. (2010). Gender differences in the relationship between attention problems and expressive language and emerging academic skills in preschool-aged children. *Early Child Development and Care, 180,* 1337-1348.

**Appendix A**

**Typical Interview Structure**

The following interview structure is taken from the ‘Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings’ document (Home Office, 2011). This is the format used by child investigative interviewers in England and Wales. Interviews conducted by Scottish practitioners follow a similar format (Scottish Executive, 2011). The theoretical and empirical background for the interview structure is explained in chapters one and two of this thesis. The purpose of this appendix is merely to give a brief outline of the phased structure, and further detail on each can be found in the ‘Achieving Best Evidence’ document (Home Office, 2011).

**Phase one: Establishing rapport**

The interviewer gives the relevant details of all of those present and explains the purpose of the interview to the child. The interviewer asks the child about neutral topics, not related to the allegation, in order to create a positive mood. The questions asked are open ended in order that they are similar to the questioning format used in the remainder of the interview. In addition, the interviewer explains the ground rules of the interview to the child. The child is instructed that if they do not know the answer to a question then they should say so, and if the interviewer says something that is incorrect then it is okay for the child to correct them. The child is advised to give a truthful and accurate account during the interview.

**Phase two: Free narrative account**

The interviewer initiates an uninterrupted free narrative account from the child using an open ended invitation, e.g. ‘tell me why you are here today’ (Home Office, 2007). Non-specific prompts are used to keep the child’s narrative going, e.g. ‘did anything else happen?’, ‘is there more you can tell me?’ The interviewer appears supportive and demonstrates active listening throughout, e.g. head nods or verbal facilitators such as ‘uh huh’.

**Phase three: Questioning**

Questions are used to assist further recall when the child’s account has been exhausted in the free narrative phase. There are various types of questions employed and their use is based upon how directive the interviewer needs to be. The questions used should be primarily open-ended followed by specific-closed questions. Forced choice and leading questions should only be used if deemed necessary.

***Open-ended questions***

These types of questions tend to elicit better quality information from children (see chapter 1 for a further detailed theoretical explanation). Open-ended questions are structured in such a way that the content and flow of information is controlled by the child and the responses are unrestricted. In addition, they pick up on information given by the child during the free narrative phase to permit further elaboration, e.g. ‘you said that he took you to the shopping centre, tell me more about that’ (Home Office, 2011).

***Specific-closed questions***

These questions allow a narrower range of responses and should only be used to further explore information described in the free narrative phase or in response to open-ended questions. These questions permit a greater level of control by the interviewer, but they provide the opportunity for the child to be passive when answering and subsequently the child may reduce their efforts during recall. These tend to be ‘what’ ‘when’ ‘who’ and ‘where’ type questions, e.g. ‘what colour was his shirt?’

***Forced choice questions***

These questions should be avoided and only used to elicit children’s information as a last resort. They give the child a number of response options to choose from, and subsequently may increase the risk that the child will guess the answer if they cannot remember the correct response, e.g. ‘was his shirt blue, red or yellow?’

***Leading questions***

Leading questions are phrased in such a way that they imply the answer to the child, e.g. ‘he was wearing a red shirt wasn’t he?’ Due to children’s reduced memory performance, and the social demand characteristics of the interview, they are more likely to give an inaccurate response to these questions (inaccurate responses to leading questions is covered in further detail in section 1.4).

**Phase four: Closing the interview**

The interviewer briefly summarises what the child has said and this allows the child to check that the interviewer has accurately understood their account. Neutral topics covered in the rapport phase are often returned to, to ensure that the child leaves the interview in a positive frame of mind. The child should also be given the opportunity to ask questions.

**Appendix B**

**Rapport Guidance for Scottish Practitioners**

The following is the written guidance given to Scottish practitioners about the rapport building phase of child investigative interviews. The information is taken verbatim from the document ‘Guidance on interviewing child witnesses in Scotland’ (Scottish Executive, 2003, p. 23 & 27-28). The information has subsequently been updated for the new revised guidelines (Scottish Executive, 2011). Nevertheless, the guidance outlined here is from the 2003 version as this was the guidance used by the practitioners in chapter 3.

**Rapport Phase: establishing a child-centred interview**

This phase is very important and **should never be omitted.** How long spent building rapport is depends on the child and their particular circumstances. While some children may be very aware of why they are about to be interviewed and wish to open up straight away, most children will need more time before they can talk openly with the interviewers. Thus, the rapport phase would be shorter in the former instance, and more time would be spent in the latter. Building rapport can overcome initial hesitance, unease or mistrust. It also conveys to the child that they are the most important (central) person in the interview and they are the one who holds the knowledge, not the interviewer.

**Rapport building with a practise interview**

Once ground rules have been established, a practise interview can be conducted. The topic for the practise interview should be a neutral, personally experienced event. This may be to do with, e.g. the child’s school, hobbies, a birthday, or a holiday. The interviewer should ask the child to describe the event from the beginning to the end.

From the practise, the interviewer can also learn more about the child’s use and understanding of vocabulary and adjust their own accordingly. The interviewer should also encourage the child to give an open-ended account (and a detailed description). They should avoid questions that will prompt brief one-word answers as much as possible, to set the form of the substantive phase of the interview.

Even in cases where the child is already familiar with the interviewer(s) through previous contact, time should be taken for fresh rapport building before commencing the interview. How long is spent on this phase is up to the discretion and common sense of the interviewers.

**Appendix C**

**Research Training in Qualitative Methodology**

**2009 How to conduct qualitative analysis** – Stirling Graduate Research School

**NVIVO software for qualitative analysis** – Stirling Graduate Research School

**Reliability and validity in qualitative research** – Stirling Graduate Research School

**Recording and presenting qualitative data** – Stirling Graduate Research School

**2008 Qualitative data analysis (distinction) –** as part of a Master of Science in Psychological Research Methods, University of Stirling

**Appendix D**

**Interview Schedule for Qualitative Interviews with Scottish Practitioners**

Below is the interview schedule that was used during the qualitative interviews with the practitioners in chapter 3.

**Introduction**

We’ve already had a look at the participant information sheet and consent form but I just want to go over some of the main points. I’m going to talk to you today about your experience of and attitude towards rapport building in joint investigative interviews. I will ask you about your own experiences of trying to establish rapport, how you carry out the rapport phase and the factors you consider important when trying to engage with child witnesses for the purposes of obtaining information. There are no right or wrong responses. I’m interested in hearing about rapport building based on your own experiences and views.

If you want to stop the interview at any time we can. You don’t need to give any explanation, just say that you want to stop and we will do so. The information you give me is entirely confidential. When I transcribe the interview, names or any potentially identifying information will be changed or removed to keep everything anonymous. No-one but me will have access to this interview. I’m recording to allow me to fully understand everything you say. If you don’t mind, I’d also like to take written notes so I can refer back to some of the things you say. Do you have any questions at this point?

**PRESS RECORD ON THE AUDIO RECORDER!!!!**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **The communicative impact of rapport building** | | |
| 1. Describe for me a time when you felt you had a good rapport (phase) with one of the young people you were interviewing? 2. In your experience what impact does the rapport phase have on communication in the substantive phase? 3. Why do you think the rapport phase has this effect ......? 4. In your experience how much ‘rapport’ do you get with a child during an investigative interview? 5. How do you know when you have managed to establish rapport with a witness? 6. In your experience is the rapport phase always necessary? Why? 7. When would you consider it essential to carry out rapport building with a witness? 8. When would you be less likely to attempt rapport building? 9. Is the rapport phase ever discussed during court proceedings? 10. Tell me what you as the interviewer get from the rapport phase? | **Prompts:**   * Good communication * child seemed relaxed * not stressed * positive * motivated, willing * There was a breakthrough during rapport. * Compliance * co-operation * detail * accuracy * suggestibility * motivation * Effort. * Transfer of control * Trust * reduced anxiety/stress * sets the tone * encourages talking * practice * Appreciation of child’s cognitive, social and emotional development. * Nature of communication * case dependent * Age dependent. * Better communication * nonverbal behaviour * child seems more relaxed * happier * Attentive. * Previous disclosure, * motivated, * age dependent * Familiarity. * Reluctant witness, * distressed child, * embarrassment, * Return to rapport. * Previous disclosure, * familiarity, * age, * Willingness. * Justification for interview technique, * rapport technique, * child’s demeanour, * good rapport, * Lack of rapport. * Appreciation of child’s cognitive, social and emotional stage of development, * adapt to child’s communication style, * deception, * willingness, * How interview may progress. | **Notes:** |
| **Establishing rapport – strategies and protocols** | | |
| 1. How do you decide when to move from the rapport phase to the substantive phase? 2. Do you have a set technique that you use to establish rapport? If so then describe and explain it for me? 3. Does age or gender impact upon how you attempt to build rapport with a witness? How? 4. How effective do you find the current rapport protocol? 5. Have you ever used play with a witness during rapport or the substantive phase? If so describe how? 6. Are toys available for you to use? 7. Would you consider using play to help establish rapport? If no why not? If yes do you think it would be beneficial and why? Is there any reason why you wouldn’t consider using play? | * Communication level, * child’s seems comfortable * More willing. * Open-ended questions, * topics, * reassurance, * tone of voice, * Body language. * Young children, * adolescence, * gender, * Case. * Practice, * communication, * training * accuracy * feasibility, * Child centred. * Toys for relaxation. * Child appropriate, * relaxation, * suggestibility * fantasy element * Impact on evidence. |  |

* Summarise the main points made by the interviewee.
* Ask if there is anything I haven’t covered.
* Ask if they would like to say anything extra and if they have any questions. **END**

**Appendix E**

**Sample of an Interview Transcript from an Interview with a Scottish Practitioner**

The following is a sample of an interview with a female police officer. She was recruited through ACPOS and this was the first time the researcher and the interviewee had met.

**Interviewer:** Okay (name) can you describe for me a time when you felt you’ve had good rapport with someone you were interviewing?

**Participant:** probably lots of times actually. Well do you want a specific one or in general? I’ve had, I can think of one where initially it didn’t start off like that because the little girl was initially quite shy, and probably worried about a police officer coming to speak to her, and there was an initial bit where I just spoke to mum and we went and got, she went and helped mum get coffee and y’know there was a bit of that and I just spoke to her as she was coming out of the room, and eventually she was wanting me to come and see things in her bedroom, y’know come and look at the toys in her bedroom and see her sister’s bed because the thing involved her sister, and that’s how that subject came up, and then I went through and I suppose I just kind of played with her for a bit because she was, she wasn’t going to be ready to speak to me anyway so I just played with her and asked her about her toys, and y’know that kind of, it’s just what I would do with any child that was reluctant to speak to me to start with I would just start with talking to them about what they are doing and, to me it’s a fairly natural thing to just chat to kids and get them speaking to you about whatever initially, to actually, and when I think about it in that rapport phase there’s an issue for us to do with truth and lies, it’s quite a big thing and I quite often find when I’m playing with them that I’ll be gauging their level of understanding about what they are talking about and y’know where they are in terms of fantasy and reality, and that came out playing with that wee girl so and it was in the rapport phase. I suppose but she was, I’m trying to think how that came out, she was playing with her toy and it’s a doll that spins and I said to her “oh she must be really dizzy” and she said “no because she’s just a doll” (interviewer laughs) and I thought well she understands the difference between fantasy and reality and so that’s, I suppose at that point I started asking her bits and pieces about, she was quite happy because we had played for a little while, she was ready to speak to me. So that would be, and that was quite a successful interview as far as we established what her account of events was following that.

**Interviewer:** okay, you mentioned quite a few interesting things there so; the first thing that you mentioned was that the mum was involved …

**Participant:** well the mum was involved so far, not actually come to think of it was that a joint one? Or was it because of urgency for whatever reason it wasn’t actually a joint interview, there was no social worker there and mum was only involved in so far as mum was there initially as I spoke to the wee girl and mum was floating about but she wasn’t, was she in the room when I spoke to her? She might have come in and out but she wasn’t there whilst I spoke to her about what had happened. I’m trying to remember if there was a social worker with me.

**Interviewer:** do you think then that having the mum there initially had any impact upon …?

**Participant:** well I suppose the circumstances where, I suppose it was just to go and speak to maybe it was, it probably wasn’t a good example when I think about it. In that situation basically mum was there because the interview was being conducted at the house. Sometimes it’s a good thing, sometimes it’s not and that’s, often I would gauge that on how the child is with, how much they connect with me while mum’s there because if mum’s there and they are continually running back and forth to mum that can sometimes not work. You don’t get anywhere.

**Interviewer:** but in this instance you mentioned mum being there, was that related to rapport at all? Do you think?

**Participant:** was it related to rapport? Not particularly, although the little girl, given her age, at that initial meeting needed her mum to be about y’know she was maybe 6 I think, and just that initial, that initial phase of speaking to me it was probably better that mum was there to reassure her.

**Interviewer:** okay and then you mentioned that you went and looked at her toys and you played with her with her toys and things like that. So you thought that was a good rapport phase, so how did you link the two then?

**Participant:** because for me, if you’re going to get somebody comfortable speaking about anything you have to make some sort of connection with them, and that’s the same for adults or children and it was a good rapport phase because she then, initially she was quite shy and worried about speaking to me y’know she doesn’t know me from Adam because she’d never seen me before so just to take a bit of time at the start until she relaxed and obviously she thought I was interested in her and what she was doing and what she had to say so that would probably make it a good, I would say that’s how you, just someone being, a child being comfortable enough to talk to you about whatever and then you’ve got a starting point.

**Interviewer:** okay so what you’re saying is that it was good rapport because maybe at first, you said at first she was shy, hesitant and then y’know when you were playing you managed to establish some sort of connection that allowed her to feel comfortable and reassured.

**Participant:** uh huh, uh huh.

**Interviewer:** and you felt as though you were conveying that you were interested in what she had to say?

**Participant:** yeah.

**Interviewer:** okay, that’s fair enough. In your experience, this is always a really difficult question to word (laughs), I always stumble over this question, I’m interested in how rapport, what impact rapport may have on communication for the whole interview, right? Could you speak about that for a minute if you, please be honest and say no if you don’t think it has an impact but if it does or whatever …?

**Participant:** well it does but it’s not always ehm, it does but it’s different in every interview, I would say and sometimes your rapport isn’t a phase at the start it’s an as you go through thing because sometimes the child’s not interested in, y’know they know why they’ve come to speak to you and they’re really not interested in, particularly I would say, well not even particularly. I’ll do it in two parts, if you get older children and teenagers and they know why they are speaking to you generally and if you yes you’ll have a chat at the start but you’re not going to spend ages talking about their interests and their hobbies or whatever because they are just like “well what am I here to speak to you about? I know what I’m here to talk to you about …” It’s quite embarrassing for them or whatever. It’s more about how you speak to them I think and sometimes it’s as you go through you get a bit of rapport with them cos you’ll be chat about, they’ll be chatting about things that have happened around about things you’re going to be asking them. Sometimes I think the rapport, it’s always important because if they don’t think you are interested in them then they are just going to tell you nothing, they are not going to give you any account and I think also sometimes you can’t do it at the beginning with little kids, you have to watch what you are doing because they would, if you never get to the point then they would go on playing forever so there’s a bit of gauging how much rapport you’ll need if you think of it purely as a kind of chat at the beginning, which it isn’t, I don’t even think it is that.

**Interviewer:** so for you it seems more of a, your saying it’s a continual thing?

**Participant:** I think it goes on through the whole interview and you gauge what you, how much of it you do at the start depending on the age of the child or the reaction you get from them when you first talk to them, or what they are prepared to do at the start y’know or whether they are relaxed or uptight or, even if they are uptight sometimes it’s better just to go straight into it because they’re not, they don’t want to sit there and talk about the weather.

**Interviewer:** Right so you gauge at the start whether or not you are going to go into a rapport?

**Participant:** well no, how I’m going to do that not because like I say I don’t think of it as purely a bit at the start, because I think it’s just how you speak to them as you go through.

**Interviewer:** right okay ehm, so you’re making the point that, so as I go along I have to clarify for later on,

**Participant:** no that’s okay

**Interviewer:** sometimes I re-interpret what you say so just tell me if I interpret something incorrectly

**Participant:** I will.

**Interviewer:** I’m feeling like I’m teaching my granny how to suck eggs when I say that (laughs).

**Participant:** no you’re alright; you carry on (laughs).

**Interviewer:** you know what I mean ‘cos you must do the same thing.

**Participant:** No no you’re alright, you carry on.

**Interviewer:** right so it does have an impact but basically it’s very individual, it’s dependent on the child and you’ll gauge at the time how you’ll go about the rapport phase whether it’s going to be something for a long period of time or it’s going to be short. You also said that differences emerge with older and younger children. With teenagers you’re saying they know why they’re there and they don’t want to spend ages …

**Participant:** yes, sometimes they they, yeah they know why they’ve come to speak to you and they might be uptight about it or whatever and if you go all around the mulberry bush before starting to talk to them about what they are there for it’s almost like they are thinking “why is she talking to me about my school and my …”

**Interviewer:** so would you say that would be almost detrimental to, to communication?

**Participant:** ehm again you’re going to gauge it on how the person reacts to you, you would probably start by saying to them like if it’s during a school day you’d talk to them about what class they have just come out of and you’d gauge how chatty or relaxed they were or whatever as to whether you’re going to ask them anymore about that or whether they are just kind of sitting there and you can tell do they want to sit and talk first or do they want to tell you what they are there to tell you.

**Interviewer:** and your saying that happens more often than not with older children then?

**Participant:** I would say, yeah I would say so although sometimes younger children will be like “I want to tell you about my …” whatever sometimes that can be because they have been primed by a parent that that’s what they are there to speak about, sometimes it can be because that’s what they want to tell you about, they know that you are a police officer or whatever so. It’s so different with every child.

**Interviewer:** okay. But basically your making the point then that it can be good for communication but it’s different for each child and that kind of leads into you gauging how you might go about it (the interview) and that then almost in a way is how you’ll carry out your communication, would you say? Or how your communication goes?

**Participant:** uh huh, uh huh.

**Appendix F**

**List of Original Categories from Open Coding**

The following is a list of the initial 71 categories generated after open coding of the interview transcripts.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Age differences * Rapport technique * Feeling comfortable * Individual basis * Encourages talking * Willing discloser * Limits to rapport * Relationship between rapport and communication * Flexibility * Understanding * Respect * Appearing interested * Child led * Communicative ability * Play rapport * Barrier * Natural interaction * Planning * Trust * Interview skills * Adapt communicative style * Engaging the child * Familiarity * Training and guidelines * On-going process * Pick up on the cues * Build up a picture of the child * Pre-conceived ideas * Removal of anxiety * Sets tone * Interviewer’s role * Reassurance * Being patronised * Rapport definition | * Allegation specific * Use of environment * Building a relationship * Tick box * Impact of rapport on interview * Link * Social norms * Touch base * Distraction * Attention span * Evidence quality * Structured protocol * Learning difficulties * Common interests * Appropriate * Control * Court proceedings * Supporter * Reluctant * Cues to rapport * Ground rules * Decisions about the interview * Managing the rapport phase * Purpose * Verbally communicating * Confusion * Boundaries * Nature of rapport * Gender differences * Closure * Personal satisfaction * Prepares the child for questioning * Allegation information * Information on interview process * Recording of rapport * Rapport outside * Setting |

**Appendix G**

**List of Categories that were Merged Together**

Below is a list of the open coded categories that were merged during the constant comparison stage of analysis.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Categories merged** | |
| Reassurance with feeling comfortable  Flexibility with individual basis  Child led with individual basis  Pick up cues with adapt communicative style  Removal of anxiety with feeling comfortable  Being patronised with respect  Common interests with natural interaction  Rapport technique with sets tone  Encourages talking with relationship between rapport and communication  Communicative ability with age differences  Barrier with limits to rapport  Planning with engaging the child  Allegation specific with trust  Tick box with natural interaction  Impact of rapport on interview with relationship between rapport and communication  Link with natural interaction  Social norms with natural interaction  Touch base with feeling comfortable  Attention span with age differences  Structured protocol with natural interaction  Appropriate with respect  Control with respect  Reluctant with willing discloser  On-going process with natural interaction  Preconceived ideas with understanding  Confusion with understanding  Nature of rapport with natural interaction  Rapport definition with natural interaction  Decisions about the interview with understanding  Sets the tone with understanding  Closure with feeling comfortable  Prepares the child for questioning with understanding  Allegation information with build up a picture of the child  Information on interview process with understanding  Use of the environment with natural interaction  Individual basis with age differences  Barrier with play rapport  Distraction with play rapport |

**Appendix H**

**List of Deleted Categories**

|  |
| --- |
| **Categories deleted**  Building a relationship  Evidence quality  Learning difficulties  Court proceedings  Supporter  Cues to rapport  Interview skills  Familiarity  Training and guidelines  Interviewer’s role  Ground rules  Managing the rapport phase  Purpose  Boundaries  Gender differences  Personal satisfaction  Recording of rapport  Rapport outside  Setting |

**Appendix I**

**Independent Researcher Analysis of Interview Transcripts**

An independent researcher who also investigates forensic interviewing practice analysed a sample of the interview transcripts. They were aware of the author’s original categories and overall theory, and were asked to check that these were an accurate representation of the data. Below is a summary of the main points raised and the adjustments made based on these points.

The independent researcher agreed with the conceptualisation that the rapport phase was used as a tool by the interviewers to facilitate the children’s communication. The separation of this into three distinct aspects was also approved but these were conceptualised with minor differences. For the ‘assessment’ component the independent analyst also saw this as a preparation period in which the interviewer was given the opportunity to prepare their approach based on the child’s presentation. The child’s background was referred to as ‘history of the child’ but on further discussion it was agreed that the history is covered in the planning stage (prior to the interview), and that the practitioners were actually referring to building a picture of the child as opposed to gaining a full history.

The ‘adjustment’ phase was originally called ‘adaptation’ by the author, but based on a discussion with the independent researcher the author agreed that ‘adjustment’ was more suitable. The researcher also highlighted that this part was about ‘overcoming barriers’ and the interviewers used the rapport phase for this purpose. Finally, he also thought the interviewers gained a sense of achievement from the rapport phase. This wasn’t included however, in the final model as the author didn’t think this was mentioned in enough detail by the practitioners.

**Appendix J**

**Enjoyment Questionnaire**

Participant Opinion Questionnaire

Participant number: Toy: D.O.B: Gender:

*(Researcher reads aloud). These questions are about the (name of toy) you did with me. If you do not understand a question then tell me and I will help you. It is important to tell the truth when answering. There are 9 questions, please answer all questions. Answer the questions by putting a* **✓** *on the picture that best describes what you think. Here are the pictures:*



*This face is really, really happy*



*This face is happy*



*This face is sometimes happy*



*This face is not happy*

*This face really, really is not happy*

**

*(I test that the child understands by asking which face is which, e.g. ‘point to the really, really happy face’ and so on. This should be carried on until the child identifies each correctly).*

*(State again that it is important for the child to tell the truth when answering and to tell me if they don’t understand a question).*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. How happy were you doing the (name of task)? | | | | |
| I was really, really happy. | I was happy. | I was sometimes happy. | I was not happy. | I was really, really not happy. |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2. How much did you enjoy the (name of task)? | | | | |
| I really, really enjoyed it. | I enjoyed it. | I sometimes enjoyed it. | I did not enjoy it. | I really, really did not enjoy it. |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 3. How much did you like the (name of task)? | | | | |
| I really, really liked it. | I really liked it. | I sometimes liked it. | I did not like it. | I really, really did not like it. |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 4. How much would your friends like to do the (name of task)? | | | | |
| They really, really would like to do it. | They would like to do it. | They would sometimes like to do it. | They would not like to do it. | They really, really would not like to do it. |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 5. How difficult was the (name of task)? | | | | |
| It really, really was not difficult. | It was not difficult. | It was sometimes difficult. | It was difficult. | It was really, really difficult. |
| 6. How much do you like Christmas? | | | | |
| I really, really like Christmas. | I like Christmas. | I sometimes like Christmas. | I do not like Christmas. | I really, really do not like Christmas. |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 7. How much would you like to do the (name of task) again? | | | | |
| I would really, really like to do it again. | I would like to do it again. | I would sometimes like to do it again. | I would not like to do it again. | I would really, really not like to do it again. |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 8. How boring was the (name of task) again? | | | | |
| It really, really was not boring. | It was not boring. | It was sometimes boring. | It was boring. | It was really, really boring. |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 9. How much did the (name of task) please you? | | | | |
| It really, really pleased me. | It really pleased me. | It sometimes pleased me. | It did not please me. | It really, really did not please me. |



THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

1. Please note that ‘forensic interview’ and ‘investigative interview’ are used interchangeably throughout this thesis. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)