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**Effects of Cognitive Interviewing, Practice, and  
Interview Style on Children's Recall Performance in  
California, 1989–1990**

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R. Edward Geiselman, Karen J. Saywitz, and Gail K. Bornstein

ICPSR 9789



EFFECTS OF COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING, PRACTICE, AND  
INTERVIEW STYLE ON CHILDREN'S RECALL PERFORMANCE  
IN CALIFORNIA, 1989-1990

(ICPSR 9789)

Principal Investigators

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Sociometrics Corporation

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## DATA COLLECTION DESCRIPTION

R. Edward Geiselman, Karen J. Saywitz, and Gail K. Bornstein  
EFFECTS OF COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING, PRACTICE, AND INTERVIEW  
STYLE ON CHILDREN'S RECALL PERFORMANCE IN CALIFORNIA, 1989-1990  
(ICPSR 9789)

SUMMARY: This data collection, designed to improve the quality of children's testimony in court, evaluates how different types of interview formats affect the completeness and accuracy of children's recall performance. Specifically, the study assesses the impact of a "practice interview" about an event on the completeness and accuracy of later reports about a second, unrelated event. Three interview conditions were employed, and each condition consisted of both a practice interview and a target interview. The three conditions were RS, RC, and CC, where "R" represents a practice session with rapport-building only, "S" represents a target interview that contained all components of the standard interview procedure, and "C" represents either a practice or target interview that contained all components of the cognitive interview procedure. In rapport-building sessions, interviewers talked about school activities, family life, and favorite games with the child. In standard and cognitive interview sessions, the rapport-building sessions were followed by a request from the interviewer for the child to verbalize a narrative account of "what happened" during an event that had been previously staged by the experimenter. This narrative account was then followed by the interviewer's request for additional information about the event. Cognitive interviews also included several additional questions that were hypothesized to improve recall performance. The number of correct items recalled and the number of incorrect items generated were used to compare the performance of children in the three interview conditions.

UNIVERSE: All third- and sixth-graders in California.

SAMPLING: Convenience sample of 34 third-graders between the ages of 8 and 9 years, and 56 sixth-graders between the ages of 11 and 12.

EXTENT OF COLLECTION: 1 data file + machine-readable documentation (PDF) + SAS data definition statements + SPSS data definition statements

EXTENT OF PROCESSING: UNDOCCHK.PR/ DDEF.ICPSR/ REFORM.DOC

DATA FORMAT: Logical Record Length with SAS and SPSS data  
definition statements

File Structure: rectangular  
Cases: 92  
Variables: 10  
Record Length: 25  
Records Per Case: 1

RELATED PUBLICATION:

Geiselman, R.E., K.J. Saywitz, and G.K. Bornstein. "Effects of Cognitive Interviewing, Practice, and Interview Style on Children's Recall Performance" (Final Report and Research in Brief). Washington, DC: United States Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice, 1991.



Data Resources Program of the  
National Institute of Justice

Data Set JU.105

EFFECTS OF COGNITIVE INTERVIEWING,  
PRACTICE, AND INTERVIEW STYLE  
ON CHILDREN'S RECALL PERFORMANCE

R. Edward Geiselman  
Karen J. Saywitz  
Gail K. Bornstein

A User's Guide  
To the Machine-Readable Files and Documentation

September 1991

Sociometrics Corporation  
170 State Street, Suite 260  
Los Altos, CA 94022-2812  
(415) 949-3282

CONTENTS OF THE DATA SET

Machine-Readable

(1) Data File (92 records; 92 cases; 10 variables)

Paper

User's Guide to the Machine-Readable Files and Documentation (this document; 10 pages)

Original Codebook (1 page; Includes variable names, value labels, and column positions of the variables in the raw data file.)

Data Set JU.105

Effects of Cognitive Interviewing, Practice,  
and Interview Style on Children's Recall Performance

Award No. 88-IJ-CX.0033

Original Investigators:

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Effects of Cognitive Interviewing, Practice, and Interview Style on Children's Recall Performance has been deposited at the Data Resources Program of the National Institute of Justice, Sociometrics Corporation, for public distribution, by R. Edward Geiselman, Karen J. Saywitz, and Gail K. Bornstein of University of California, Los Angeles. Data collection was funded by the National Institute of Justice under Award No. 88- IJ-CX-0033. Funding for the work done by the Data Resources Program to prepare the data for public use was provided by the U. S. Office of Justice Programs under Contract No. OJP-89-C-008 to Sociometrics Corporation.

Users of the data are strongly urged to inform the Data Resources Program of any errors or discrepancies. They are further urged to bring to the attention of the Data Resources Program all problems and difficulties encountered, particularly those that may prevent effective and convenient use of the data.

All manuscripts based on data made available through the Data Resources Program should acknowledge that fact as well as cite the data set (see suggested citation format, inside front cover). Users of these data are urged to follow some adaptation of the following statement.

The data used in this publication were made available by the Data Resources Program of the National Institute of Justice, Sociometrics Corporation, 170 State Street, Suite 260, Los Altos, CA 94022-2812. The study entitled Effects of Cognitive Interviewing, Practice, and Interview Style on Children's Recall Performance was conducted by R. Edward Geiselman, Karen J. Saywitz, & Gail K. Bornstein, University of California, Los Angeles, Department of Psychology, Los Angeles, CA 90024. Data collection was funded by the National Institute of Justice (Award No. 88-IJ-CX-0033). Funding support for preparing the revised documentation for public distribution was provided by a contract (OJP-89-C-008) between the U. S. Office of Justice Programs and Sociometrics Corporation. The original investigators, funding agency, and the Data Resources Program are not responsible for the analyses or interpretations presented here.

To provide funding agencies with essential information about use of archival resources and to facilitate the exchange of information about Data Resources Program participants' research activities, each user of these resources is requested to send a copy of each completed manuscript, thesis abstract, or reprint to the Data Resources Program of the National Institute of Justice, Sociometrics Corporation, 170 State Street, Suite 260, Los Altos, CA 94022-2812.

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## SUMMARY

This project evaluated the use of different types of interview formats on the completeness and accuracy of children's recall performance. Specifically, the study assessed the impact of a "practice interview" with children about one event on the completeness and accuracy of the same children's later reports about a second, unrelated event. Third and sixth graders participated in one of three interview conditions. Each condition consisted of both a practice interview and a target interview. The three conditions were: RS, RC, and CC, where 'R' represents a practice session with rapport-building only, 'S' represents a target interview that contained all components of the standard interview procedure, and 'C' represents either a practice or target interview that contained all components of the cognitive interview procedure. In rapport-building sessions, interviewers talked with a child about his or her school activities, family life, favorite games, etc. In standard and cognitive interview sessions, the rapport-building sessions were followed by a request from the interviewer for the child to verbalize a narrative account of 'what happened' during an event that had been previously staged by the experimenters. This narrative account was then followed by the interviewer's request for additional information about the event. Cognitive interviews also included several additional questions that were hypothesized to improve recall performance. The number of correct items recalled and the number of incorrect items generated were used to compare the performance of children in the RS, RC, and CC conditions.

Data were collected between 1989 and 1990 and are contained in one file. The file contains 92 cases (34 third graders and 58 sixth graders) and 10 variables (grade, interview condition, gender, number of correct items recalled, number of incorrect items generated, number of interview questions asked, interview duration, number of rapport questions asked, number of leading questions asked, and number of inappropriate exchanges). Subjects were recruited from elementary schools in Inglewood, CA, and in Los Angeles, CA.

## GENERAL STUDY OVERVIEW

Source: Geiselman, R.E., Saywitz, K.J., and Bornstein, G.K. (1991). Effects of cognitive interviewing, practice, and interview style on children's recall performance. Final report to the National Institute of Justice.

## Study Identification

Effects of Cognitive Interviewing, Practice, and Interview Style on Children's Recall Performance

R. Edward Geiselman Karen J. Saywitz, and Gail K. Bornstein

University of California, Los Angeles

Award No. 88-IJ-CX-0033

## Key Words

Cognitive interview, standard interview, practice interview, children, recall performance.

## Purpose of the Study

In recent years, an increasing number of children have been asked to testify in court. One concern for the courts is that many cases have been dismissed because of confusing testimony by children and because of doubts about the accuracy of children's memories. This study was concerned with how to improve the quality of children's recall performances. The major purpose was to evaluate the use of different types of interview formats on the completeness and accuracy of children's recall performance. The following are some of the questions addressed by the data:

1. What interview formats are most effective in promoting correct recall of events in children?
2. Do children recall more correct information when given cognitive interviews than when given standard interviews?
3. Are cognitive interviews more effective when preceded by a practice cognitive interview than when preceded only by a rapport-building session?
4. Do third graders and sixth graders respond similarly in each of the interview conditions?

## Methods

### Study Design

This project evaluated the use of different types of interview formats on the completeness and accuracy of children's recall performance. Specifically, the study assessed the impact of a "practice interview" with children about one event on the completeness and accuracy of the same children's later reports about a second, unrelated event. This study employed a 2 x 3 between-subjects design, with the first factor being grade level (third or sixth) and the second factor being interview condition (CC, RC, or RS), where 'R' represents a practice session with rapport-building only, 'S' represents a target interview that contained all components of the standard interview procedure, and 'C' represents either a practice or target interview that contained all components of the cognitive interview procedure. In rapport-building sessions, interviewers talked with a child about his or her school activities, family life, favorite games, etc. In standard and cognitive interview sessions, the rapport-building sessions were followed by a request from the interviewer for the child to verbalize a narrative account of "what happened" during an event that had been previously staged by the experimenters. This narrative account was then followed by the interviewer's request for additional information about the event, including people who were present and objects that were visible. Cognitive interviews also included several additional questions. For example, in cognitive interviews, children were asked to recall the events in reverse order and they were asked to take the perspective of another person who was present during the event and to describe what he or she would have seen and heard. The number of correct items recalled and the number of incorrect items generated were used to compare the performance of children in the RS, RC, and CC conditions.

### Sources of Information

Data were collected in experimental sessions in which subjects were interviewed by sheriff's deputies who had been instructed on the proper interviewing procedure. All dependent measures were collected during these target interview sessions.

### Sample

The subjects who participated in this study were 34 third graders between the ages of 8 and 9 years old (18 females and 16 males), and 58 sixth graders between the ages of 11 and 12 years old (29 females and 29 males). They were recruited from two elementary schools within the Inglewood, California, School District, and from one elementary school in Los Angeles, California. The parents or guardians of each child were contacted through the schools by letter for their consent. Assent to participate then was obtained from each child who was given permission by his/her parents/guardians.



### Response Rates

Response rate for parents of third graders was 31% and response rate for parents of sixth graders was 53%. All children who were given parental approval agreed to participate in the study.

### Dates of data Collection

The data were collected between January, 1989, and December, 1990.

### Summary of Contents

### Description of Variables

The variables in this study are: child's grade, child's interview condition, child's gender, the number of correct items the child recalled, the number of incorrect items the child generated, the number of interview questions asked by the interviewer, the duration of the interview, the number of rapport exchanges between the interviewer and the child, the number of leading questions asked by the interviewer, and the number of inappropriate questions asked by the interviewer (i.e., interruptions by the interviewer, overly persistent questioning, etc.).

### Presence of Common Scales

None.

### Unit of Observation

The unit of observation is the individual child.

### Geographic Coverage

Inglewood, California, and Los Angeles, California.

### Evaluation

#### Data Quality

Checks for out-of-range and missing values indicate that the data file is free from coding errors and from missing values.

#### Data Limitations

The investigators did not choose to run other interview conditions such as 'CS' (cognitive practice interview followed by standard target interview) 'SS' or 'SC'. These conditions may be of interest to other researchers.

#### Reports and Publications

Geiselman, R.E., Saywitz, K.J., & Bornstein, G.K. (1991). Effects of cognitive interviewing, practice, and interview style on children's recall performance. Final report and research brief for the National Institute of Justice. [Award No. 88-IJ-CX-0033]

Saywitz, K.J., Geiselman, R.E., & Bornstein, G.K. (1991). Effects of cognitive interviewing and practice on children's recall performance. Unpublished manuscript, University of California, Los Angeles. (under review)

DATA COMPLETENESS AND CONSISTENCY REPORT

This section presents information regarding the quality of the data in this Data Set. Tables 1 and 2 indicate the extent and location of out-of-range values, and Tables 3 and 4 summarize the incidence of missing data. Table 5 provides information regarding the adherence to the skip pattern of the questionnaire and consistency of the data as reflected in the logical relations between particular items.

Number of Cases: 92  
 Number of Variables: 10

Table 1. Distribution of Variables by Percentage of Out-of-Range Values

Distribution of Variables By Percent Out-of-Range Values			
Percent of Cases with Out-of-Range Values		Number	Percent
0%	(0 cases)	10	100.0%
> 0% to 100%	(1 to 92 cases)	0	0.0%
Total		10	100.0%

Table 2. List of Variables With Out-of-Range Values

None.

Table 3. Distribution of Variables by Percentage of Missing Values

Distribution of Variables By Percent Missing Values			
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Percent of Cases with Missing Values	Number	Percent
0% (0 cases)	10	100.0%
> 0% to 100% (1 to 92 cases)	0	0.0%
Total	10	100.0%

Table 4. List of Variables With Over 5% Missing Values (5 Missing Values or More)

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None.

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Table 5. Report on Consistency Checks

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Because of the nature of the data, no consistency checks could be performed.

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July, 1991

## DATA CODE BOOK

Prepared for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ Grant No. 88-IJ-CX-0033) in conjunction with NIJ Final Report "Effects of cognitive interviewing, practice, and interview style on children's recall performance."

Prepared by: R. Edward Geiselman, Principal Investigator

File Name: NIJKIDS

Format: free

Variable Name	Column Numbers	Description
Grade	1	1 = third, 2 = sixth
Interview Condition	3	1 = practice cognitive & target cognitive ("CC") 2 = practice rapport & target cognitive ("RC") 3 = practice cognitive & standard target ("RS")
Gender	5	1 = male, 2 = female
# Correct	7-8	no. correct items recalled
# Incorrect	10-11	no. incorrect items generated
# Questions	13-14	no. interview questions asked
Questioning Time	16-17	interview duration (min)
# Rapport	19-20	no. rapport exchanges
# Leading	22	no. leading questions
# Inappr.	24-25	no. inappropriate exchanges

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