UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Enhancing Adolescents' Disclosures via Rapport-Building Strategies

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in Social Ecology

by

Emma Simpson

Thesis Committee:
Professor Jodi Anne Quas, Chair
Associate Professor J. Zoe Klemfuss
Distinguished Professor Elizabeth F. Loftus

2023

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Jodi A. Quas for her support and mentorship, as well my committee members, Drs. J. Zoe Klemfuss and Elizabeth Loftus for their thoughtful contributions.

Funding was provided by the National Science Foundation (2116377).

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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Adolescents comprise an important population of witnesses. However, little research has examined their disclosure tendencies, especially developmental processes that affect those tendencies, such as their allegiance to peers (whose behaviors may be of interest) and beliefs about their autonomy. It is imperative to ascertain how best to elicit detailed disclosures from them about wrongdoing or harm. Strategies that improve children's and adults' disclosures (e.g., rapport building) have not been adequately tested in adolescents. Thus, the present research tested how modified rapport-building tactics that address motivational reasons why adolescents are reluctant enhance their reports of prior experiences.

A total of 125 14-19-year-olds (M_{age}=16.9; 67% female) completed an online pre-questionnaire about significant events (e.g., bullying by a peer) that occurred in past year, as well as questionnaires assessing personality and well-being. Participants then completed an online interview about one of the significant events endorsed, beginning with one of three rapport-building instructions varied during an initial "getting to know you" phase. A standard conditioned consisted of closed ended (yes/no) questions, while an open-ended condition consisted of open-ended questions. Finally, an enhanced condition paired open-ended question with interviewer self-disclosures.

Analyses were conducted to address the effects of type of rapport on the amount and content of information reported. Overall, participants in the enhanced condition produced the longest and most elaborated reports, with more pronounced benefits for younger adolescents. Results suggest that mutual disclosure by an interviewer may be especially beneficial for eliciting detailed accounts from adolescents. The research highlights a potentially effective and easily trainable strategy that may be useful in obtaining reports from adolescents about their prior experiences.

INTRODUCTION

At the same time research has demonstrated the powerful effects of how questions are phrased on the accuracy and completeness of witness reports in forensic settings (Ahern et al., 2018; M. E. Lamb et al., 2007; Malloy et al., 2017; Roebers & Schneider, 2000), research has revealed that the context of the interview, separate from the questions per se, exerts an equally powerful effect (Saywitz et al., 2019; Teoh & Lamb, 2013). Context includes a host of characteristics, ranging from the number of interviewers present and where the interview is conducted to the interviewers' demeanor, support, and rapport building approaches. Of these characteristics, a great deal of attention has been directed toward not only the effects of rapport building on witness reporting, but also on how rapport building can be altered to improve the completeness of witnesses' reports without compromising accuracy. This attention has included studying rapport building effects on children's reports of suspected maltreatment (Hershkowitz, 2011; E. A. Price et al., 2016), and on adult victims', witnesses', high value informants', and even suspects reports (Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014; Kieckhaefer et al., 2014; Meissner et al., 2015; Vallano & Compo, 2015), with those effects including disclosure willingness, completeness, and accuracy.

In light of this impressive body of research on the effects of rapport on children's and adults' reports, it is quite surprising that so few investigations have focused on its effects on adolescents, particularly in light of evidence that adolescents are both likely to encounter a range of delinquent or violence experiences or be with peers who are exposed to such experiences, and as a result are likely questioned in legal settings about what they know, experienced, or witnessed (Hinnant & Forman-Alberti, 2019; Leukefeld et al., 2014). Yet, at the same time, adolescents also possess a number of characteristics that may make them reluctant to talk about

their experiences, especially to adult authority figures. Given adolescents' exposure to high-risk experiences, combined with their likely exposure to interviews about those experiences and possible reluctance, it is of considerable importance to identify the best methods of questioning adolescents specifically about prior negative and potentially harmful experiences to elicit clear and complete disclosures. Rapport building may be one such method, a possibility examined here. Specifically, the overarching purpose of the present study was to explore the effects of rapport building on the amount and content of adolescents' reports of prior salient experiences. Prior to describing the study, the unique developmental needs of adolescents are described, followed by a definition of rapport and relevant literature on rapport building (both for children and adults). Next, a description of how different approaches to rapport may affect adolescents is provided, and finally, the need to ascertain how adolescents' reports might unfold in the context of remote interviewing is reviewed.

Adolescent Development, Experiences, and Reporting Tendencies

In order to understand how rapport may affect adolescents' reports, their developmental needs must be considered, as this likely makes them a unique population of victims and witnesses. For one, adolescents, compared to children, both want and have more autonomy over many aspects of their lives (Daddis, 2011; van Petegem et al., 2012). This increased autonomy, coupled with more time spent with peers, may lead adolescents to engage in new behaviors, including risky behaviors (e.g., experimenting with drugs and alcohol or engaging in sexual behavior) or be with peers who engage in such behaviors (Larson et al., 1996; Pringle et al., 2017; Trucco, 2020). Although normative, adolescents' experiences also increase their risk of exposure to violence, crime, or harm.In fact, adolescents make up a significant proportion of witnesses to and victims of crime, especially violent crime (Finkelhor et al., 2014, 2015;

USDHHS, 2018), meaning that they are likely to be questioned by a host of individuals (e.g., law enforcement, social services, etc.) who need to determine what happened, who is culpable, and what risks need to be addressed.

Furthermore, when questioned, adolescents may be reluctant to share information about their experiences with adults. For example, as peer relationships become increasingly salient (B. B. Brown & Larson, 2009), adolescents may be hesitant to talk about experiences that implicate their friends or those they feel complicit in. Further, with development, adolescents better understand adults' motives, especially in an interview setting; this could potentially lead them to become skeptical or wary about disclosing certain experiences. Finally, some experiences also may be embarrassing to discuss with an adult (e.g., sexual victimization), leading to increased reluctance (Goodman-Brown et al., 2003).

Rapport Building

At perhaps the broadest level, the goals of building rapport in forensic settings are to increase comfort, trust, and understanding in order to enhance the amount and accuracy of details provided by interviewees, including details that they may be reluctant to disclose (Abbe & Brandon, 2013; Saywitz et al., 2015). These broad goals are consistent regardless of who is being interviewed, for instance, a child or adult victim or witness, or an adult suspect of committing or knowing significant details about a crime. Across studies involving children and adults, findings fairly consistently suggest benefits of rapport building (Gabbert et al., 2021; Lavoie et al., 2021). In children, benefits have been uncovered when their reports have been evaluated via analogue (i.e., experimental and experimenter-created to-be-remembered events) and field (i.e., naturally occurring to-be-remembered events, particularly suspected maltreatment exposure) investigations (Hershkowitz et al., 2015; Hershkowitz & Lamb, 2020; T. D. Lyon et al., 2014;

Roberts et al., 2004). In adults, benefits of rapport have similarly emerged in analogue research on transgression disclosure but also field research on police interviews with suspects (K. Collins & Carthy, 2019; Dianiska et al., 2021; Kieckhaefer et al., 2014; Walsh & Bull, 2012). Despite the consistency in findings across samples, though, there has been considerable variation in how rapport has been operationalized, hence making it unclear what specific rapport strategy, or combination of strategies, might be best for adolescents, who fall developmentally in between children and adults.

In research with children, rapport building typically includes two general components. One is a set of "getting to know you" questions embedded in an introductory conversation that takes place prior to any substantive questions about the target topic (e.g., abuse, prior laboratory activity) (Saywitz et al., 2015). Equally important to the inclusion of the getting-to-know-you questions is how the questions are phrased and what topics are covered in the questions. The questions should be phrased in an open-ended manner (e.g., Tell me about some things you like to do) in order to allow children to recall as much information as possible, priming them to provide elaborated reports as they will later in the interview (Yi & Lamb, 2018). Moreover, the topics targeted by the questions should cover both positive and negative topics (most often the child's likes and dislikes) and a prior experience (most often a prior birthday) (Henderson et al., 2022; M. Lamb et al., 2018; T. Lyon, 2021). In combination, therefore, this component of rapport allows children to practice narrating details of episodic experiences in order, practice discussing positive and negative details, and exposure to the types of questions themselves.

The second component of rapport includes the provision of ground rules (e.g., the importance of telling the truth). The instructions provide the child with guidance on the nature of the interview, and also establish the child as the expert in the situation while the interviewer is

ignorant to what happened (Brubacher et al., 2015). Ground rules, like getting-to-know-you questions, are also designed to increase reporting details and accuracy, but the motivational reasons why vary. Ground rules could increase comfort by giving children permission not to answer, but primarily ground rules are also believed to motivate children to be honest and thorough in their reporting and to address children's potential naivete regarding the purpose of the interview (Fessinger et al., 2021). Because ground rules target different motivational processes than getting-to-know-you questions, and because adolescents are more savvy than children regarding adults' motives (Steinberg, 2005), the current study focuses on the getting-to-know-you portion. As discussed next, this component in adults has varied in ways that could affect adolescents.

That is, operationally, rapport building with adults also includes two components, getting to know you questions and instructions. In adults, though, there is no guidance on the topics or format of the getting-to-know-you questions. Presumably adults do not need practice narrating, given their greater general knowledge about the purpose of the interview. Instead, the getting-to-know-you questions are designed to improve the dyadic interactional dynamics between the interviewer and adult, for instance, by identifying sources of similarities or commonalities (Abbe & Brandon, 2014; Brimbal et al., 2019; Dianiska et al., 2021). Finding and discussing common interests highlights similarities, which should increase comfort and liking, (N. L. Collins & Miller, 1994) and thus reporting. In rapport building, what has been termed mutual self-disclosure is a method of highlighting those similarities. Specifically, in response to an adult answering a getting-to-know-you question with personal details, an interviewer is instructed to do the same, that is, to engage in self-disclosure by revealing personal information about themselves.

Instructions at times are included in rapport building with adults, although the precise instructions vary from those used with children. For instance, instructions may include efforts and language that establish the investigator or law enforcement officer's credibility or involve a description of the interview procedure and the interviewees' responsibilities (Abbe & Brandon, 2013). Such instructions could help adults' understanding and hence increases comfort. More likely though, the instructions increase the chances that interviewees know their roles and meet expectations.

Despite differences in rapport's operationalization across children and adults, findings are consistent in suggesting that rapport positively affects reporting. In field studies examining forensic interviews in cases of child sexual and physical abuse, for example, comparisons have been made between the original NICHD interview protocol and Revised Protocol. The Revised Protocol aimed to reduce socioemotional factors associated with reluctance (e.g., emphasizing open-ended rapport prior to ground rules, using nonsuggestive support). Children are more likely to disclose abuse when interviewers follow the Revised than original, possibly a result of the greater focus on rapport (Hershkowitz et al., 2014; Hershkowitz & Lamb, 2020). Analogue studies have also been conducted, allowing for accuracy and completeness to be evaluated. Open-ended questioning at the onset of an interview increases the amount of substantive detail (including emotion-related details) that children provide about prior experiences (Karni-Visel et al., 2019; Lavoie et al., 2021; H. L. Price et al., 2013), with no negative effects on the accuracy of detail reported, even for negative events and transgressions (Lyon et al., 2014; Yi & Lamb, 2018).

As mentioned, investigations with adults have similarly uncovered positive effects of rapport building on reporting tendencies. A majority of this work, especially field investigations,

though has concerned adult suspect or high value detainee disclosures rather than witnesses or victims' disclosures. Nonetheless, rapport building, defined as attentional and coordination behaviors described above (repeating statements, establishing credibility, etc.), is related to increased amounts of information reported, or fuller, more comprehensive reports in field studies (K. Collins & Carthy, 2019). Analogue studies, which have manipulated rapport to include interviewer self-disclosure and common ground, have found these behaviors also lead to more informative and accurate reports when adults are questioned about a prior transgression (Dianiska et al., 2021) or witnessed mock crime (Vallano & Compo, 2011).

Rapport in Adolescence

Given evidence of benefits of rapport on both children's and adults' reporting tendencies, it is quite likely that rapport would also enhance adolescents' reports. Yet, because of differences in the precise ways in which rapport has been operationalized, it is not entirely clear which form of rapport building might be most effective. Some consideration of adolescents' developmental needs is informative.

On the one hand, perhaps open-ended rapport could be useful in establishing expectations. Adolescents could also practice answering questions and learning about the interview process. On the other hand, adolescents (compared with younger children) likely already possess knowledge of those expectations given their greater knowledge in general and of expectations in interactions with adults (Steinberg, 2005). This knowledge, though, may make adolescents reluctant to talk with adults. They may be less willing to talk to adults about negative behaviors they or their friends have engaged in out of fear of getting themselves or others in trouble (i.e., not wanting to "snitch" on friends). Practitioners (police officers and social workers) for instance, cite unwillingness from adolescent victims to openly tell what happened or

who is at fault (K. Collins et al., 2014). Likewise, individuals suspected of being minor victims of commercial sexual exploitation often display high levels of reluctance in interviews with police (Henderson et al., 2021). Open-ended questions may therefore be insufficient in motivating adolescents to disclose or provide elaborate or detailed accounts of prior experiences because the questions, in isolation, do not reduce adolescents' fear of punishment or fear of presumed repercussions from telling on others.

What may be more important, therefore, is adolescents' relationship to the interviewer. Mutual disclosure may be one way of facilitating this relationship. Developmentally, adolescents value both status and respect, and they want to be treated as competent and have agency in their decision making (Yeager et al., 2018). Mutual disclosure may perhaps make adolescents feel more as an equal in the interaction, as disclosure by the interviewer may signal respect, and thereby increase feelings of connectedness and respect in adolescents. Related, research on motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2012) suggests that promoting and attending to adolescents' needs is successful in therapeutic contexts (e.g., smoking cessation, treating substance use disorders), as is encouraging autonomy and providing adolescents with choices (R. A. Brown et al., 2009, 2015) All of the latter could be facilitated via mutual disclosure, as it attends to adolescent's developmental needs, similar to that in motivational interviewing.

Self-disclosure by an interviewer may also lead to feelings of positivity and closeness for adolescents. That is, encouraging adolescents to talk might increase willingness to share, but only if that sharing is met with genuine and personal sharing on the part of the interviewer. Research on friendships in adolescence highlights the need for self-disclosure of personal details, as it builds feelings of closeness and openness (i.e., intimacy) with others (Bauminger et al., 2008), feelings that could similarly be promoted in an interview with an adult. Finally, because

mutual self-disclosure is stressing similarities, it could be particularly useful in increasing adolescents' feelings that they are similar to adults, further fostering feelings of respect and autonomy.

Finally, given that rapport building is designed to increase comfort in the interviewee, it may be particularly effective at enhancing reporting of negative or emotional details relative to other types of event details. While individuals may readily report factual details of an event, they may be less likely to report details concerning their emotions, evaluations, or reactions to the event, especially in reference to negative events like violence exposure (Katz et al., 2016; M. E. Lamb et al., 1997; T. D. Lyon et al., 2012). However, these types of details are important to the perceived credibility and accuracy of reports, making them an important aspect to consider (Nitschke et al., 2019; Rowsell & Colloff, 2022; Vrij, 2005; Westcott & Kynan, 2004). If an interviewer is sharing their personal thoughts and feelings through self-disclosure, adolescents may be likely to share theirs as well. Thus, mutual self-disclosure might be valuable not only in increasing reporting, but specifically in relation to evaluative and personal details.

As a final note, given that adolescence itself is not a unitary period of development, but instead it is one across which considerable changes occur, it is likely that the effects of rapport vary across adolescents of different ages. For instance, young adolescents may not fully benefit from mutual disclosure, as they may not feel the need for full autonomy in the way that older adolescents might; thus, open-ended questioning may be sufficient. On the other hand, the desire to feel more adult-like may be more relevant to older adolescents. Mutual disclosure, then, may be beneficial in increasing the likelihood they will share information.

Remote Interviewing

A final issue of interest in the current study concerned whether the effects of rapport building would be evident in a remote interview context. Pragmatically, remote interviewing protected the health and safety of participants, as data collection occurred during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, more broadly, it is important to establish the value of remote interviewing as comparable to in-person interviewing for several reasons. That is, remote interviewing has become increasingly common as a way of collecting information from hard-to-reach populations, and the COVID-19 pandemic further increased its usage (Alvarado, 2021; Lucas & Villarroel, 2022). Telehealth also seems to be an effective alternative to face-to-face psychotherapy for both children and adults (Greenwood et al., 2022; Meininger et al., 2022). Although few studies have focused on virtual forensic interviewing, and even fewer with adolescents, research with children suggests that there are no differences in the amount of information reported (Doherty-Sneddon & McAuley, 2000; Hamilton et al., 2017) and its accuracy (Dickinson et al., 2021) in remote interviewing compared to in-person interviews (see Brown et al., 2021 for a review). Research reveals the same pattern with adults questioned about a mock crime they witnessed (Hoogesteyn et al., 2023). One study found increased benefits of virtual interviews, such that when interviews were conducted in a virtual environment participants were more accurate than when conducted face-to-face (Dando et al., 2022). Thus, although remote interviewing seems to be comparable to traditional face-to-face interviewing, how interview manipulations, like rapport building, affect adolescents' reporting in remote contexts is important to examine directly.

Present Study

The overarching goal of the present study was to examine systematically how rapport-building, including not only open-ended questioning but also mutual self-disclosure, affect the amount and type of information that adolescents disclose about a previously experienced negative event and whether the effects vary across development. To address this goal, 14-19-year-olds took part in a two-phase study. During an initial phase, participants completed questionnaires in which they identified negative experiences and transgressions that had occurred within the last 12 months. During a second phase, participants completed online interviews about what happened during one of the negative experiences they reported as having occurred. Interviews began with one of three rapport conditions: standard (control), open-ended, or mutual self-disclosure, hence rereferred to as enhanced. Afterward, they answered questions about their perceptions of the interview.

Hypotheses were as follows: Both enhanced and open-ended rapport conditions will increase the amount of detail provided, both factual details and evaluative or emotion-related information. Age effects are also hypothesized, such that older adolescents will benefit more from enhanced rapport than will younger adolescents.

Methods

Participants

In total, 132 individuals completed the study. Of these, seven were deemed ineligible due to inconsistencies in their answers about their birthdate or location (participants needed to be in the United States). They were excluded, leading to a final N = 125 14-19-year-olds (M = 16.9, SD = 1.7). Participants reported their gender and race via free response (67% female, 28% male,

and 6% genderqueer or nonbinary; 37% White, 34% Asian, 20% Hispanic/Latino, 5% Black, and 4% other).

Materials and Procedure

All study procedures were approved by the University of California, Irvine Institutional Review Board. Participants aged 18 years and older provided informed consent for themselves. For participants aged 17 years or younger, parents provided written informed consent and youth provided assent. Specifically, youth were recruited via word of mouth and flyers and announcements at schools. Youth who expressed an interest in the study were asked to provide their parents' contact information. Parents were then contacted via email or phone and the study was explained. Those who wished to participate signed the consent, and afterward youth were re-contacted and given the assent form. Once participants' consent or assent was secured, they were directed with an online link to the Phase 1 online questionnaires.

Phase 1: Pre-interview Online Questionnaires

Phase 1 was comprised of online questionnaires. First were demographic questions about participants' age, gender, primary language, race and ethnicity, and average grades in school. Next were personality and well-being questionnaires – the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) (Gosling et al., 2003), the Shyness and Sociability Scale (Cheek & Buss, 1981), and the Trauma Symptoms Checklist for Children (TSCC) (Briere, 1996)—included to screen for personality and health functioning characteristics that may influence adolescents' general comfort interacting or sharing personal information.

Finally was the Child and Adolescent Survey of Experiences (CASE; Allen & Rapee, 2012), a checklist of negative experiences, such as being teased or bullied, and positive

experiences, such as doing well on an important exam. Embedded in the original CASE items was a second set of transgression and risky behavior items, such as shoplifting or experimenting with illegal drugs (Dianiska et al., 2019). Participants were instructed to read the list of experiences and behaviors, and respond yes or no regarding whether each had occurred during the past year. The full list of items is included in Appendix A. At the end of the CASE, participants were sent a link to sign up for a remote interview at their convenience.

Once participants completed the online questionnaires, they were thanked and given a calendar link to schedule the next phase.

Phase 2: Online Interview

Although participants were asked to schedule the interview in the next few weeks, no formal time frame was required. Most sessions occurred within a month, although with rescheduling, the delay for some participants was significantly longer, M = 12.3 days, SD = 18.5, range: 0-173 days. The interview involved questioning participants about one of the experiences they reported having occurred on the CASE they completed in Phase 1.

The specific or target experience about which participants were questioned was determined by selecting the most serious negative event/behavior that participants endorsed as having occurred on the CASE. Seriousness ratings had been collected from a separate set of pilot youth (n = 13) aged 14-18-years-old, who were asked to rate the list of CASE items regarding how serious each experience/behavior was on a 7-point scale from not at all (1) to extremely (7), see Appendix A.

A number of the current study participants (n = 32) did not endorse any negative experiences or behaviors. For these participants, we asked about two different sets of events. For

21 participants, the most serious positive event they endorsed was selected as the target event. For 11 participants, the target event was a general prompt, "a time in which they wronged another person," and were asked to describe an experience that concerned this prompt. Finally, four participants who had endorsed negative experiences reported that they did not wish to discuss the selected target event. They were also given the generic prompt, "time in which they wronged another person" as the target experience. Three additional participants were unwilling to report on either prompt.

The interviews began with a brief introduction by an unfamiliar interviewer (70% female) who explained that they will get to know each other through some icebreaker questions. The interviewer then followed one of three rapport instructions, with participants being randomly assigned to one of the conditions. Gender and age were roughly equally distributed (standard: M_{age} = 17, 75.6% female; open ended: M_{age} = 16.8, 60% female; enhanced: M_{age} = 17, 72.5% female).

Standard Rapport. The standard rapport condition contained 22 closed ended (yes/no, short answer (e.g., Do you have any pets; What is a hobby of yours) questions. The questions are similar to those often included in actual forensic interviews with suspected child victims and did not contain additional prompts or encouragements (e.g., implicit encouragement; Quas & Dickerson, 2019) to elaborate on their answers.

Open ended. The open-ended rapport condition contained 15 primarily open-ended questions (e.g., How did you spend last Halloween). For six of these, the interviewer followed with a "tell me more prompt" (e.g., Tell me more about that) or affirmed their response (e.g., Oh wow, that's impressive). The general format followed recommendations in best practice

protocols for interviewing child witnesses (M. Lamb et al., 2018; T. Lyon, 2021; Saywitz et al., 2018).

Enhanced. The enhanced rapport condition, which involved mutual disclosures between the interviewer and participant, contained ten open-ended questions. These were similar in topic to those in the open-ended rapport condition, with two of the questions also being accompanied by "tell me more "prompts. In addition, though, after the adolescents answered, interviewers followed by sharing information about themselves. The content was semi-scripted and allowed the interviewer to highlight similarities with participants, with the requirement that the interviewers shared at least ten pieces of personal information with the participant.

After rapport building, interviewers asked about the target experience. The questions began by interviewers asking participants if they would be willing to talk about the experience. The interviewers then asked participants to "tell everything that happened about the target event in as much detail as possible." After participants exhausted their initial reports, interviewers followed with two additional follow up prompts asking for more details. At the end of the interview, participants were thanked and given a link to complete the Phase 3 questionnaires.

Phase 3: Post-interview Online Questionnaires

The post-interview questionnaires (see Dianiska et al., 2019) concerned participants' perceptions of the event they discussed and of the interview itself. Questions about the experience concerned how important it was, how unpleasant it was, how strong participants' memory was, how certain participants are the event happened as they described it, how well participants remember the emotions they felt at the time of the event, and how well they remember their emotions at the time of the interview, all rated on a 7-point scale, not at all (1) to

extremely (7). Questions concerning the interviewer asked how boring, smooth, satisfying, awkward, friendly, and positive the experience was, all rated on a 6-point scale from not at all (1) to extremely (6). Two other questions asked how much information participants felt they provided to the interviewer and how willing they were to provide that information, rated on an 8-point scale from not a lot/not at all (1) to all of the information/extremely willing (8).

A final set of questions asked participants to rate the seriousness of all of the CASE items and to indicate how likely they would be to share information about each one if they were to experience it, and, if so, indicate whether they would share to a friend, parent, and authority figure. Afterward, participants were given a separate link to select a gift card in exchange for taking part.

Coding

All interviews were audio and/or video recorded and transcribed verbatim. The participants did not consent to being recorded, so transcripts of the interview were obtained via Zoom auto-captioning. Three types of dependent measures were then created from participants' reports about the target events. First, raw word count was calculated in Excel as a general index of the overall amount of information provided about the target events (Dickinson & Poole, 2000). Second, reports were separated or bracketed into units of information, defined as any individual parts of speech that provide information about the event or experience (e.g., [I] [was feeling] kind of [upset]). During this process, fillers (e.g., um, like) and repeated words and phrases were not bracketed (e.g., [I] just like [after] that I just like [swore off]). The bracketed units were then individually coded for content, separating units related to the event's timeline (i.e., factual or objective details about concrete aspects of the experience) and units related to evaluative details (i.e., subjective information about what participants were thinking or feeling

during the event). Examples of each, along with how units were distinguished, are in Appendix B.

Three coders were trained and independently coded 24% of units of information for reliability. High agreement was found between coders for both types of content, as the ICC was .99 for timeline-related information and .88 for evaluative information. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion, and the remaining interviews were divided at random and equally among the coders.

Results

Preliminary and Descriptive Analyses

Analyses first tested for differences in participant's age, gender, race, and delay across the three rapport conditions. A one-way ANOVA revealed no significant differences in the age of participants across conditions, $F(2,122) = .19$, $p = .83$. Likewise, no significant differences emerged in the gender (female vs. nonfemale) or race/ethnicity (white vs. nonwhite) distributions across conditions, $\chi^2(2, N = 125) = 1.51$, $p = .47$, and $\chi^2(2, N = 122) = .116$, $p = .94$, respectively. Finally, delay between Phase 1 and Phase 2 (the pre-interview online questionnaires and interview) was comparable across rapport conditions, $F(2,122) = .33$, $p = .72$.

Second, analyses examined whether demographic characteristics and delay were related to the type of event discussed in the interview, the event's seriousness (as rated previously by pilot youth), and the amount reported. Gender was unrelated to the type of event (positive vs. negative) discussed, $\chi^2(1, N = 125) = .003$, $p = .95$, the event's seriousness, $t(123) = .273$, $p = .79$, or amount reported, $t(123) = .869$, $p = .39$. Race/ethnicity was similarly unrelated to the type of event discussed, $\chi^2(1, N = 125) = .45$, $p = .46$, and the amount reported, $t(120) = .513$, $p = .61$.

However, events' seriousness did differ by race, such that white participants (M = 5.3) discussed events rated as more serious than nonwhite participants (M = 4.9), $t(120) = -2.13$, $p = .035$. Finally, delay was unrelated to the type of event discussed $t(123) = .027$, $p = .98$, the event's seriousness $r(123) = -.042$, $p = .64$, and the amount reported $r(123) = -.05$, $p = .58$.

To gain a richer understanding of the types of events participants reported and their seriousness, descriptive analyses were conducted. Events selected by the largest number of participants included doing well on an important test or exam (17%, mean seriousness rating of 6.15 based on pilot youth); Illegally downloading music, movies, or software (10%, Seriousness M = 3.49) lying about whereabouts to parents (10%, M seriousness = 4.46); committing plagiarism (9%, Seriousness M = 5.77), and having a big argument with someone not in their family (8%, Seriousness M = 5.62). Because the CASE contained both positive and negative events, it is not surprising that participants endorsed both types, as reflected in the percentages reported above. No significant differences across rapport conditions emerged in the mean seriousness ratings of the target events discussed, $F(2, 122) = 1.16$, $p = .32$. Finally, whether the event was positive or negative did not differ across conditions, $\chi^2(2, N = 125) = .44$, $p = .80$.

Effects of Rapport and Age on Reporting

The primary aims of the study were to examine the effects of type of rapport on the amount of information reported and the content of reports, as well as whether these effects vary across age. To address these aims, two sets of main analyses were conducted. First, the total amount of information, reflected in word count, was entered as the dependent measure into a one-way rapport condition (standard, open-ended, enhanced) analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with age entered as continuous covariate, and the condition by age interaction entered. The main effect of rapport condition was significant, $F(2, 122) = 2.31$, $p = .043$. Pairwise comparisons

(Least Significant Difference) revealed that participants in the enhanced condition (M = 560, SD = 770) provided significantly longer reports than those in the standard condition (M = 320, SD = 378) (p = .023) and somewhat longer reports than those in the open-ended condition (M = 364, SD = 224; enhanced v. open-ended difference p = .068). Perhaps surprising in light of work that suggests age-related increases in productivity continue throughout adolescence (Quas et al., 2014), the main effect of age was nonsignificant, $F(1, 124) = .394$, p = .531, as was the rapport condition X age interaction, although the latter approached significance, $F(2,122) = 2.778$, p = .066.

A moderation test was run to explore the interaction, though should be interpreted with caution, as the effect only approach significance. With age entered as the continuous predictor, word count as the outcome, and rapport condition as the moderator, there was a significant moderating effect of rapport condition on the effects of age on word count b = -156.4, SE = 67.14, p = .022. Conditional analyses revealed that increased age was marginally associated with fewer words reported in the enhanced condition, though, b = -92.31, SE = 50.9, p = .072.

As mentioned, a small number of participants failed to identify any negative experiences and were instead asked about the most serious positive event they identified. To ascertain whether the rapport effects remained when these participants' narratives were removed (theoretically, rapport might have a larger effect on adolescents' reports of negative events about which they might be reluctant to talk), analyses were reconducted with only participants reporting negative events. The trends were identical, although the main effect of rapport condition became statistically nonsignificant $F(2, 101) = 2.78$, p = .067.

Effects of Rapport and Age on Content of Reports

To examine the effects of rapport building on the content of reports, a 3 (condition) x 2 (content type: timeline versus evaluative) mixed model ANCOVA was conducted with age as a covariate, and the rapport condition by age interaction also included. With all variables entered, the difference in how much of each type of information provided, which was strikingly large, was statistically marginally significant: Participants reported more information related to the event's timeline (M = 174.07, SD = 200.45) rather than evaluative information (M = 36.66, SD = 68.62) $F(1, 119) = 3.68$, p =.058. There was a main effect of rapport condition and content type $F(2, 119) = 5.38$, p = .006. Participants reported more of both types of information in the enhanced compared to the standard: timeline $t(83) = -1.7$, p = .047, evaluative $t(83) = -1.79$, p =.039. Finally, there was a significant interaction among content type, rapport condition, and age $F(2, 119) = 4.91$, p = .009. Moderation tests were run to explore this interaction further.

Two separate tests were run with age as the continuous predictor, units of information (timeline or evaluative) as the outcome, and rapport condition as the moderator. One significant interaction effect emerged, such that there was a moderating effect of rapport condition on the association between age and units of information related to the event's timeline b = -77.45, SE = 26.08, p = .007. Conditional analyses revealed that increased age was associated with less timeline information reported for participants in the enhanced rapport condition, b = -44, SE = 19.77, p = .028, but not in the standard or open-ended conditions. No other significant interactions were found among age, content type, and rapport condition.

Exploratory Analyses

Finally, individual difference measures were explored, namely all subscales from the TIPI (extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness) and TSCC (anger, anxiety, depression, dissociation, and posttraumatic stress). To examine the effects of personality and trauma symptoms, both individually and in combination with rapport conditions, on amount reported. Separate moderation tests were run with each individual difference measure as a predictor, word count as the outcome, and rapport condition as the moderator. There were no significant main effects of any of the individual difference measures on amount reported. One significant interaction effect was found, such that there was a moderating effect of rapport condition on the association of openness and amount reported b = -347.15, SE = 144.39, p = .018. Conditional analyses showed higher openness scores were associated with fewer words reported in the enhanced rapport condition, b = -204.83, SE = 90.42, p = .025, but not in the standard or open-ended conditions.

Discussion

The current study aimed to test the effects of different rapport building techniques on adolescents' reports of prior salient experiences, as well as how these effects may vary across age. Specifically, rapport building conditions were manipulated to include a standard (control), open ended, and enhanced condition that featured mutual self-disclosure. Participants aged 14-19-years-old were interviewed about a prior experience, and each interview began with one of three rapport building conditions. Reports were then analyzed by word count and the content of the reports, that is information related to the target event's timeline or evaluative information. Findings are important in highlighting a potentially effective and easily trainable strategy that may be effective at increasing adolescents' communication about personal, important, and

potentially negative experiences. Further, findings emerged in a remote interview setting, highlighting its potential utility, and also bringing promise considering its increased usage across various settings (e.g., telemedicine).

Summary of Major Findings

In assessing the effects of rapport condition on the amount of information reported (reflected by raw word count), a clear pattern emerged: The amount reported increased in a linear fashion from the standard to enhanced condition, with the open-ended condition falling in the middle. Somewhat surprising was that the amount of information reported did not differ as a result of participant age, directly or in conjunction with rapport condition, although there was a marginally significant interaction effect of rapport condition and age suggesting that perhaps the enhanced condition was more effective with younger adolescents, with the amount reported decreasing with age in the enhanced condition. When the content of the reports was examined, overall, participants reported more timeline information than evaluative (though marginally significant), with an interaction suggesting that participants in the enhanced condition reported more of both types of information relative to the standard condition. The three-way interaction among content type, rapport condition, and age again hinted that the effects of the enhanced condition were strongest among the youngest adolescents. As age increased, timeline-related information decreased for participants in the enhanced condition.

Taken together, the results demonstrate that enhanced rapport outperformed both the open-ended and standard rapport conditions in terms of how much participants reported, as well as the type of content reported, with the magnitude of this outperformance being slightly greater for younger compared to older adolescents. Positive effects were present for both types of information examined here, such that enhanced rapport increased both timeline-related

information and evaluative information. Thus, perhaps enhanced rapport is better at addressing adolescents' developmental needs and potential reluctance to share information with adults compared to an approach that only includes open-ended questions. With mutual self-disclosure, not only were the participants sharing personal information, but so was the interviewer. Perhaps this mutual sharing made participants feel closer to, and more comfortable with, the interviewer.

Because the interviewer is also sharing information, it is clear that the interviewer is actively listening and participating in conversation, making the interaction feel genuine, which itself can be highly effective in increasing individuals' willingness to engage in a wide range of interpersonal interactions (Baer & Peterson, 2002). Finally, it may tap into adolescents' need for autonomy and respect, as they might feel like more of an equal in the conversation, and thus more adult like, perhaps making them more likely to disclose.

Examining age effects proved less straightforward. Neither analysis (using word count or content type) produced significant main effects of age. This is surprising, as one would expect age-related increases in productivity, as has been reported in multiple studies (M. E. Lamb et al., 2000, 2003; Quas et al., 2014). Even more interesting were the interaction effects with age and rapport condition, as two moderation tests revealed similar patterns: as participant's age in increased, total amount reported and timeline-related information decreased, but only for those in the enhanced rapport condition (though the former only approached significance). These findings suggest that, for younger adolescents in particular, enhanced rapport may be more beneficial than it is for older adolescents, helping to increase the amount of information in reports.

However, there were only significant interactions with timeline-related information and a marginally significant interaction with total word count, and, overall, participants reported

marginally more timeline information in general. Thus, perhaps enhanced rapport may still be beneficial in helping to elicit evaluative details, even across age.

Finally, exploratory analyses yielded little findings on the effects of individual differences, specifically personality and trauma symptoms, on the amount of information provided in reports. Across the five personality indices (extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability, and openness), and subscale of the trauma symptoms (anger, anxiety, depression, dissociation, and posttraumatic stress), only one significant interaction was found; rapport condition moderated the effect of openness on amount reported. For participants in the enhanced condition only, higher openness scores were associated with fewer words reported. Perhaps adolescents who are open to new experiences are already innately comfortable at the outset of an interview and do not need enhanced rapport to feel at ease or comfortable sharing information. However, more work should examine individual differences, including personality, to further disentangle its effects on reporting, and how potential associations with decreases in or decrements to reporting may be remedied.

Limitations

While the present work highlights the feasibility of conducting interviews in remote, online settings, results are unable to be compared to an interview conducted live and in person. It is true that reporting tendencies, whether it be increases or decreases in amount reported, may be different when an adolescent is interviewed remotely.

Additionally, the CASE checklist in the pre-interview online questionnaire included both positive and negative experiences, as both types of events are commonly experienced by adolescents. However, some adolescents did not report having experienced any serious (as

deemed by pilot youth) negative events, so they were interviewed about a positive event. Generally, rapport building is used in an interview before a negative topic (e.g., prior wrongdoing, victimization) is discussed, as there would not be any reasons for discomfort or reluctance to talk about something positive, except perhaps general discomfort from talking to a stranger. When these were removed from the analysis examining total amount reported, patterns remained (nominal increases in amount reported from standard, to open ended, to enhanced rapport), but main effects became statistically nonsignificant. This is likely because the sample size decreased, thus power to defect effects, if present, decreased.

Conclusion

There are several contexts in which adults need to gain information from youth about things they have experienced or witnessed; adolescents are more frequently exposed to new and risky situations (e.g., experimenting with drugs) than their younger peers, and are at a relatively high risk of victimization and violence exposure. Consequently, it is of great importance to explore and test ways of increasing their reporting, as done here. Rapport building is seen as a critical component of interviews, yet the ways in which rapport should be built with adolescents has not been a feature of the broader literature. Future work should continue to examine the strategies tested here, how they may vary into older adolescence and young adulthood, and more generally, strategies that tap into and accommodate their developmental needs to enhance reporting overall, including in perhaps increasingly common remote interview contexts.

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Appendix A

Pre-Interview Online Questionnaire: List of Experiences

Experience	Seriousness ratings from pilot youth
I assaulted someone with the intent of harming him or her, with bare hands or with some kind of object or weapon	7
I went joyriding (borrowed someone's car without permission)	6.923
I carried an illegal or concealed weapon, like a gun, knife, or club	6.846
I shared or posted inappropriate sexualized pictures of someone else on social media	6.846
I drove or operated a vehicle while under the influence	6.846
I intentionally set fire to destroy property that did not belong to me	6.846
I sold a type of illegal drug or controlled substance, like prescription drugs, marijuana, crack, or something else	6.769
I vandalized property, like keying a car, slashing a tire, spraying graffiti, or destroying mailboxes	6.692
I obtained or used prescription drugs for nonmedical purposes (like getting high, staying awake, to have fun)	6.615
I shoplifted something worth $25 or more	6.462
I tried, used, or experimented with illegal drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, crack, LSD, or something else	6.308
I stole property worth $25 or more	6.308
I smoked, bought, or tried to buy cigarettes or Juuls/vapes	5.769
I took credit for someone else's work, ideas, or answers as your own (plagiarism)	5.769
I trespassed or broke into buildings for fun or to look around	5.692
I lied about my whereabouts to my parents	4.462

I illegally downloaded music, movies, software, or something else	4.385
I drank, bought, or tried to buy alcohol	4.154
I did well in an important test or exam	6.154
I saw something bad happen	6.077
I was seriously told off or punished by a teacher	6
I gave up a bad habit (e.g., smoking, drinking)	5.923
I had a big argument with someone special to me (who is not in your family)	5.615
I had a big argument with someone in our family	5.385
I changed schools	5.385
I stayed away from home overnight without permission	5.308
I was teased or bullied	5.231
I was really sick or injured	5.231
I made a new special friend	5.231
I was in a fight (not with people in my family)	5.231
I (or my team) won a prize, award, or contest (e.g., school, sports, music, dance)	5.231
I broke up with a boyfriend or girlfriend	5.154
I went on a special holiday (e.g., around California, around the U.S., overseas)	5
I got a new boyfriend or girlfriend	4.923
I took up a new hobby / sport / activity	4.462

Appendix B

Sample coded report (bolded brackets indicate evaluative details, all others coded as timeline-related information)

Okay so [I] [was] [in 5th] maybe [6th] [grade] I think, that's when **[I] [was]** like pretty like **[outgoing]** and like **[social]** but like really **[scared]** of just **[talking]** to **[teachers]**.

And [I] [forgot] [to do] this [assignment] that [I] [was] [asked] and [we] [were] [supposed] to tell it um we were supposed to like [read] [it] [to a partner].

And **[I] [was] [fine] [with that]** but **[I] [was] just [scared]** that **[I] [didn't do] [it]** so [I] [had to take] the [teacher]'s [example] that [she] [gave out] [on [her] um [example] slides] and I guess [I] just [copied] and [paste] but [then] just [changed] a few [words].

I was, I remembered **[I] [was]** um **[scared]** like like very scared and **[I] [was like sweating]** and **[shaking].** Um I guess [I] [told] [my] [friend] [about it] but [she] [didn't tell] [anybody], so **[that] [was] [good]** I guess. Yeah that's all I remember.