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An Investigation into the Effective and Ethical Interviewing of Suspected
Sex Offenders

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 The Benefits Associated With an Offender Confessing.....	2
1.3 Report Outline.....	5
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
2.1 Theoretical Models of Confessions.....	6
2.1.1 <i>The Decision Making Model</i>	6
2.1.2 <i>The “Reid” Model</i>	7
2.1.3 <i>The Interaction Process, Cognitive Behavioural, and Psychoanalytic Models</i>	9
2.2 The Special Status of Sex Offenders and Their Offences	10
2.3 The Importance of Evidence	11
2.4 Police Interviewing Techniques	15
2.5 Ethical Issues and False Confessions	24
2.6 Chapter Summary and Conclusions	25
CHAPTER 3. STUDY ONE.....	27
3.1 Convicted Sex Offenders’ Perceptions of Police Interviewing: A Qualitative Approach.....	27
3.2 Method.....	28
3.2.1 <i>Participants</i>	28
3.2.2 <i>Procedure</i>	29

3.3 Results.....	31
3.3.1 <i>Sex Offenders' Feelings during the Interview</i>	31
3.3.2 <i>Evidence against the Offender</i>	32
3.3.3 <i>Suspects' Decisions to Confess or Deny</i>	33
3.3.4 <i>Sex Offenders' Reasons for Wanting to Confess or Deny</i>	33
3.3.5 <i>Sex Offenders' Perceived Benefits of Confessing and Denying</i>	35
3.3.6 <i>Sex Offenders' Suggestions for Improving Police Interviewing</i> <i>Skills</i>	36
3.3.7 <i>Desirable Personalities, Characteristics, and Demographics of</i> <i>Police Interviewers</i>	39
3.4 Discussion.....	41
CHAPTER FOUR. STUDY TWO.....	44
4.1 Convicted Sex Offenders' Perceptions of Police Interviewing: A Quantitative Approach.....	44
4.2 Method.....	45
4.2.1 <i>Participants</i>	45
4.2.2 <i>Materials</i>	46
4.2.2.1 <i>Questionnaires</i>	47
4.2.2.2 <i>Vignettes</i>	48
4.2.3 <i>Procedure</i>	49
4.3 Results.....	50
4.3.1 <i>Confessors' and Deniers' Perceptions of How They Were</i> <i>Interviewed</i>	50
4.3.2 <i>Offenders' Perceptions of How They Were Interviewed and How</i> <i>the Police Should Interview</i>	52

4.3.3 <i>Offenders' Perceptions of the Efficacy of the Different Strategies</i>	
<i>Used in the Vignettes</i>	56
4.4 Discussion.....	58
CHAPTER 5. STUDY THREE.....	61
5.1 Experimental Manipulations of the Presentation of Evidence: The	
Importance Of Accuracy and Detail.....	61
5.2 Method.....	62
5.2.1 <i>Design</i>	62
5.2.2 <i>Participants</i>	62
5.2.3 <i>Procedure</i>	62
5.3 Results.....	68
5.3.1 <i>Manipulation Checks</i>	68
5.3.2 <i>The Influence of Detail and Accuracy on Mock-Suspects'</i>	
<i>Decisions To Confess</i>	70
5.3.3 <i>The Relationship between Detail and Accuracy, and Perceived</i>	
<i>Strength of Evidence, Guilt and Pressure to Confess</i>	71
5.4 Discussion	72
CHAPTER 6. STUDY FOUR.....	74
6.1 Police Officers' Perceptions of Interviewing Suspected Sex Offenders: A	
Qualitative Approach.....	74
6.2 Method.....	75
6.2.1 <i>Participants</i>	75
6.2.2 <i>Procedure</i>	76
6.3 Results.....	77
6.3.1 <i>How Police Officers Came to be Working in the Area</i>	77

6.3.2 <i>Police Interviewers' Perceptions of How Suspected Offenders Should, and Are Being Interviewed</i>	78
6.3.3 <i>How Police Interviewers Describe a Typical Suspected Sex Offender</i>	83
6.3.4 <i>Police Interviewers' Perceptions of Whether Interviewing Suspected Sex Offenders Differs From Interviewing Suspected Non-Sex Offenders</i>	84
6.3.5 <i>Police Interviewers' Perceptions of the Aspects Related to the Interview That Impact on Whether a Suspected Sex Offender Confesses or Denies</i>	87
6.4 Discussion.....	92
6.4.1 <i>Limitations of the Present Study and Suggestions for Future Work</i>	92
6.4.2 <i>Conclusions</i>	93
CHAPTER 7. REPORT SUMMARY AND GENERAL CONCLUSIONS.....	95
7.1 Chapter Overview.....	95
7.2 The Importance of Evidence.....	95
7.3 Humanity, Dominance, and Ethical Interviewing.....	99
7.4 Minimisation and Maximisation.....	103
7.5 Cognitive Distortions and Feelings of Guilt.....	104
7.6 Policing Perspectives	106
7.7 Limitations and Future Research.....	108
7.8 Conclusion	110
REFERENCES.....	111
APPENDIX A: Questionnaire Items, Means and Standard Deviations	121

APPENDIX B: Vignette Example.....128

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Means and standard deviations for sex offending confessors and deniers perceptions' of police interviewing strategies during their own interview.....	52
Table 4.2: Means and standard deviations for sex offending participants' ratings of their own interview experience, and their ratings of how the police should ideally interview in order to obtain confessions from guilty suspects.....	54
Table 4.3: Means and standard deviations for violent offending participants' ratings of their own interview experience, and their ratings of how the police should ideally interview in order to obtain confessions from guilty suspects.....	55
Table 4.4: Means and standard deviations (in brackets) of participants' responses to questions according to vignette condition.....	58
Table 5.1: Mock-suspects ratings' of likelihood of confessing, strength of evidence, guilt and pressure in relation to detail and accuracy.....	70

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Sex offences are both frequent and traumatic (Crime and Misconduct Commission, 2003). For example, a study by the National Institute of Justice in the United States found that for a sample of 8000 women and 8000 men, 17.6% women and 3% men had experienced rape sometime during their lifetime, and that of these rape victims, 21.6% of females and 48% of males had been raped before the age of 12 years (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). Additionally, these authors found that amongst the adult rape victims, 32% of women and 16% of men were injured during the rape, and a total of 33% of women and 25% of men required counseling from a mental health professional following the rape (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). In another National Institute of Justice Study, Ashcroft, Daniels, and Hart (2003) found that in a sample of 4,023 male and female children aged between 12 and 17 years, 8.1% had been sexually assaulted. Ashcroft et al. (2003) also determined that sexual assault increased the prevalence of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) amongst these children by a factor of four to five fold compared with those who were not sexually assaulted.

Other researchers have found similarly worrisome results. For example, some estimates suggest that between 20 and 30% of females in the United States suffer at least one rape or rape attempt in their lifetime (Ellis, 1989; Koss & Oros, 1982; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987). Additionally, the National Women's study surveyed 4,008 women, and of the women who had been raped, 31% displayed PTSD, a prevalence rate 6.2 times higher than for women who had not been raped (Kilpatrick, Edmunds, & Seymour, 1992).

Within Australia, the percentage of women experiencing sexual violence such as rape or attempted rape in their lifetime appears to be somewhat lower than in the United States, with estimates ranging between 1.9% (ABS, 1996) and 9-10% (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004). Importantly however, when definitions of sexual violence are expanded to include behaviors such as unwanted sexual touching in addition to rape, the percentage of Australian women affected in their lifetime rises to 24% (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004).

Unfortunately, sexual offences are often difficult to investigate and prosecute, particularly because many victims do not report sexual crime (Clay-Warner & Burt, 2005). Further, when they do, conviction rates are low compared with other crimes (Greenfield, 1997) perhaps because unlike most other criminal offences, sex offences most often occur within personal settings and with few corroborating witnesses. In this sense, if other evidence is not available, a case of sexual assault may rely on the victim's word against that of the offender. Additionally, the fact that sex offenders show reasonably high recidivism rates (Furby, Weinrott, & Blackshaw, 1989; Hanson, Steffy, & Gauthier, 1993) means that if sex offenders are not convicted and effectively dealt with, for example through treatment or incarceration, they are likely to re-offend.

1.2 THE BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH AN OFFENDER CONFESSING

Before presenting and summarizing the literature regarding improving rates of confessions, it is useful to justify why this area deserves attention. Generally, there are three important advantages associated with an offender confessing to an investigator.

Firstly, the likelihood of a conviction being secured is greatly increased. As Justice Byron White has commented,

The defendant's own confession is probably the most probative and damaging evidence that can be admitted against him. ... [T]he admissions of a defendant come from the actor himself, the most knowledgeable and unimpeachable source of information about his past conduct. Certainly, confessions have profound impact on the jury, so much so that we may justifiably doubt its ability to put them out of mind even if told to do so. *Bruton v. United States*, 123-140.

Kassin and Neumann (1997) have confirmed this assertion experimentally. They conducted three mock-juror studies that compared the impact of confessions on mock jurors, compared with eyewitness identifications and character testimony in trials for murder, rape, assault, and theft. Results indicated that confessions had a greater impact on mock-jurors than the other types of evidence. Direct evidence does not exist, to our knowledge, concerning how often a confession leads to a sex offender being convicted. Nevertheless, indirect evidence suggests that confession evidence may be the best predictor of a sex offender being convicted. Reported confession rates for sex offenders vary. Mitchell (1983) reports a confession rate for sex offenders of 90% in a United States sample. Sigurdsson and Gudjonsson (1994) report a confession rate for sex offenders of 83% in one study in Iceland, and in another they report a confession rate of 83% for child molesters and 61% for rapists. Given the low conviction rates for sexual crimes (Greenfield, 1997; Harris & Grace, 1999) and the fact that a confession makes a conviction more likely, it is reasonable to assume that confession evidence is a major factor in securing the convictions that do occur.

A second advantage of an offender confessing is that the likelihood of the victim having to give evidence in court is reduced, as is the negative impact on the victim from testifying about their abuse (Eastwood & Patton, 2002; Lipovsky, 1994). This is particularly pertinent for cases involving sexual offences or vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. For example, testifying in a trial is one of four significant predictors of PTSD symptoms in adult survivors of child rape, and having a civil lawsuit pending is one of three predictors of depression among adult victims (Epstein, Saunders, & Kilpatrick, 1997; Mackey et al., 1992). Thirdly, an advantage of an offender confessing early in the investigation, means that a lengthy trial can be avoided, thereby reducing the financial burden and resource expenditure associated with prosecuting the offender.

Taken as a whole, the above literature suggests the great importance of securing confessions from offenders and has attracted the interest of organizations such as the Crime and Misconduct Commission. Despite this argument though, to date, most psychological research has focused on the issue of identifying personality factors and situational influences that lead innocent individuals to falsely confess to crimes they have not committed, rather than focusing on increasing confessions from guilty suspects (Gudjonsson, 2003).

Included in this report is an examination of four separate research studies that took place under this research grant. The focus of the research is on improving police interviewing of sex offenders and identifying factors associated with an increased likelihood of an offender confessing. The main research variables under investigation in this report, for reasons that are explained in the next chapter, are humanity,

dominance, an understanding of cognitive distortions, minimization, maximization, ethical interviewing, and accuracy and detail of evidence.

1.3 REPORT OUTLINE

Chapter two gives a review of available literature regarding police interviewing of suspected offenders as well as factors associated with suspects' decisions to confess or deny their alleged offences. In chapter three we present a qualitative study concerning semi-structured interviews with convicted sex offenders. The study is focused upon convicted sex offenders' perspectives of police interviewing and factors they believe to be associated with decisions to confess or deny offences. In chapter four we present a quantitative, and experimental study concerning sex offenders' and non-sexual violent offenders' perspectives of police interviewing, and interviewing techniques associated with mock offenders' decisions to confess or deny their offences. In chapter five we present an experimental study that examines the impact of accuracy and detail of evidence on mock-suspects' decisions to confess. In chapter six we present a qualitative study concerning semi-structured interviews with police officers who interview suspected sex offenders. Finally, in chapter seven, we review and summarize the general findings of the research and discuss the implications of these findings for future research and practice.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter we summarize the state of our knowledge concerning interviewing suspected offenders in order to increase the rate of confessions from guilty suspects. We also aim to critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of past research. To begin, we present a brief overview of theoretical models that seek to explain why and how suspects decide to confess or deny an alleged crime. Next, we identify the factors that make sex offenders and their offences unique, and review and present available literature regarding the importance of evidence, as well as the impact of a variety of police interviewing techniques on suspects' decisions to confess or deny. Finally, we present ethical considerations relevant to the area of interviewing suspected sex offenders.

2.1 THEORETICAL MODELS OF CONFESSIONS

Before we can begin to understand why certain interviewing techniques may be effective in increasing rates of confession, we need to first understand why an offender would choose to confess or deny a crime, and what factors might influence this decision. In previous literature, researchers have proposed a variety of different theories or models in an attempt to explain the decisions of suspects' to confess or deny. These models can be used to influence police interviewing or interrogation approaches. We will present the most prominent of these theoretical models here.

2.1.1 The Decision Making Model

Higendorf and Irving (1981) proposed a theoretical model based on decision-making theory. They suggest that when offenders decide to admit or deny their offence, they

first have to consider the likely consequences of each alternative decision, including whether they will be convicted even if they deny an offence. Next they have to estimate the subjective probability of each possible alternative actually occurring (see also, Larrick, 1993). For offenders, the most obvious consequence of confessing to an offence is the increased likelihood of a conviction and subsequent punishment. However, if they deny a crime and are convicted they are likely to receive a higher punishment, and so, if they believe the probability that they will be convicted is high, their best choice is to confess. Less obvious consequences may also be associated with an offender confessing. For example, the suspect may believe the interviewing police officer would become angry or aggressive towards the offender if they confessed and this may increase the consequences of confessing and in turn reduce the likelihood of a decision to confess.

2.1.2 The "Reid" Model

Inbau, Reid, & Buckley (1986) describe the "Reid" model, which can be construed as a psychological manipulation that seeks to increase the likelihood of a suspect confessing through making decisions to confess more appealing and decisions to deny less appealing. Clearly, there is some overlap with this procedure and the decision-making model, although in some respects the fact that the suspect must make a decision to confess or deny means that decision-making must be a component of any model seeking to explain confessions. The 'Reid Technique' forms the basis of one of the most popular police interrogation training manuals available, and espouses nine basic steps for an effective interrogation (Inbau, Reid & Buckley, 1986).

According to Inbau, Reid & Buckley (1986), the nine steps for effective interrogation are direct positive confrontation (the interviewer directly and confidently accuses the suspect of being guilty, and advises them of the benefit of telling the truth and admitting their guilt), theme development (the interviewer demonstrates an understanding of the suspect's way of thinking, and appears to minimise, normalize, justify or rationalise their offending), handling denials (the interviewer does not allow the suspect to deny the offence, and instead interrupts their denials and tells them to listen to the evidence etc), overcoming objections (the interviewer does not allow the suspect to argue or explain their 'innocence'), procurement and retention of the suspect's attention (if the suspect seems to be withdrawing from the process or not paying attention, the interviewer regains their attention by speaking to the suspect, touching them, or moving closer to them), handling the suspect's passive mood (the interviewer must show sympathy for the suspect and focus their mind on a particular theme of their guilt, for example the reason for their offence; they can also attempt to make the suspect feel more guilty about their offending), presenting an alternative question (the interviewer must present the suspect with two different scenarios for the offence, where one scenario is clearly worse than the other; this will make the suspect choose the seemingly less serious scenario in order to save face), having the suspect orally relate various details of the offence (the suspect is required to provide an oral confession regarding their actual offence, and their motives for committing the offence), and finally, converting an oral confession into a written confession (the suspect is required to sign a written confession which is developed from their oral confession). Largely, this interviewing technique is made up of two key strategies, minimisation and maximisation. These two strategies are important variables in the current research and will be discussed in more detail later.

Though this interrogation technique is popular, and is often widely regarded as the most successful police interrogation approach, some researchers consider this technique to be ethically questionable and controversial (e.g., Gudjonsson, 2003; Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004). This is because the technique is considered to be highly coercive and because limited empirical data exists regarding its effectiveness in yielding a greater percentage of true confessions (as opposed to no confessions or false confessions) (Gudjonsson, 2003). According to Gudjonsson (2003), any confessions which result from this technique should be viewed with caution.

2.1.3 The Interaction Process, Cognitive Behavioural, and Psychoanalytic Models

Moston, Stephenson, and Williamson (1992) suggest an interaction process model of confession, where the background characteristics of the suspect and offence, contextual characteristics of the case (e.g., legal advice) and the interviewer's questioning technique interact to influence decisions to confess. Again, this is similar to the decision-making model, but with the addition of a consideration of the changing influence of the interviewer's questioning over time.

Similarly, Gudjonsson (1989) suggests a cognitive-behavioural model of confession that is similar to that of Moston, Stephenson, and Williamson (1992), but additionally emphasizes the fact that the suspect may "learn" to respond in ways encouraged by the interviewer.

Finally, there is the psychoanalytic model (Reik, 1959) in which confessions are seen as arising from internal conflict and feelings of guilt (this is likely to be particularly relevant to sex offenders and their offences).

2.2 THE SPECIAL STATUS OF SEX OFFENDERS AND THEIR OFFENCES

There appear to be six reasons to believe that police interviewing of sex offenders is likely to be different to the interviewing of other offenders, thereby justifying a “special” status for sex offenders and their offences. First, police officers appear to hold more negative attitudes towards sex offenders than towards other offenders. For example, Holmberg and Christianson (2002) surveyed 43 convicted murderers and 40 convicted sex offenders. Sex offenders’ ratings of being respected and shown kindness by police officers were lower than comparable data from the murderers. Similarly, Hogue (1993) found police officers held more negative attitudes towards sex offenders than prison officers, probation officers, and perhaps unsurprisingly sex offenders themselves (see also, Lea, Auburn, & Kibblewhite, 1999).

Second, considerable stigma is associated with sex offending that may make this an offence that it is particularly difficult for offenders to admit (McGrath, 1990; Quinn, Forsyth, & Mullen-Quinn, 2004). Third, some sex offenders often have personality deficits (e.g., Fisher, Beech, & Browne, 1999) that may make interviewing more difficult because of their poor interpersonal skills. Fourth, a number of studies indicate that sex offenders have distorted ways of thinking about their victims that support their offending (Swaffer, Hollin, Beech, Beckett, & Fisher, 1999; Ward, Hudson, Johnston, & Marshall, 1997). For example, many who offend against children agree with statements such as, “Having sex with a child is a good way for an adult to teach the child about sex”, “A child who doesn’t physically resist an adult’s sexual advances, really wants to have sex with the adult”, and “when a young child walks in front of me with no or only a few clothes on, she is trying to arouse me”

(Abel, Gore, Holland, Camp, Becker, & Rathner, 1989). Police officers may have little insight and understanding of these cognitions.

Fifth, the interpersonal nature of sexual offences means the principle source of evidence is likely to be eyewitness evidence (Eastwood & Patton, 2002; Kebbell, Hatton, & Johnson, 2004; Home Office, 1998) and thus interviewing officers may not feel that they have as much incriminating evidence to present against a suspect as they may have in other cases. Sixth, the traumatic nature for victims of testifying about sexual abuse means that preventing contested trials, if possible, is more important than in other cases (e.g., Epstein, Saunders, & Kilpatrick, 1997; Mackey et al., 1992).

Clearly, there is reason to believe that sex offenders and their offences are special cases with unique status. For this reason, this report is primarily concerned with sex offenders rather than general offenders, and aims to identify ways of increasing rates of confessions from these offenders through effective and ethical police interviewing.

2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF EVIDENCE

We turn now to the important factor of evidence, and attempt to examine its impact on suspects' decisions to confess or deny. One way of shedding light on offenders' reasons for confessing is to ask them directly. Gudjonsson and Petursson (1991) used this approach with 74 Icelandic prisoners who had admitted to their crimes. Respondents were required to respond to questions using a Likert scale that was labeled "not at all" (1 or 2) to "very much so" (6 or 7). The majority (55%) of offenders gave scores of 6 or 7 to the question, "Did you think the police would eventually prove you did it?" and this was the most frequently rated reason for

confessing. Gudjonsson and colleagues have replicated this finding (Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 1999; 2000), although it must be noted that what they label the “perception of proof” factor in these later papers involves a combination of questions including, “Did you think the police would eventually prove you did it?” as well as some which are not directly related, other than by factor analysis, to perceptions of proof such as “were you under the influence of alcohol when you committed the offence?”.

Whilst this approach provides some apparently useful information, the data has to be treated with some caution. As with all self-report data, participants are likely to be motivated to portray themselves in a good light, and saying they confessed because of evidence may be more desirable for them to say than, for example, the police cleverly tricked them into confessing. Another drawback to this approach is that offenders are relying on their memories for what happened, in some instances, many years ago. Nevertheless, a field study conducted by Moston, Stephenson, and Williamson (1992) in England provides additional support for the importance of evidence.

Moston, Stephenson, and Williamson (1992) investigated confession rates for 1067 suspects who had been interviewed by detectives. Again the majority of cases concerned non-sexual offences. The results showed that when the researchers rated the evidence against the suspect as weak, confessions occurred less than 10% of the time, and denials occurred 77% of the time. When the evidence was rated as strong by the researchers, confessions were frequent, occurring in 67% of cases, while denials were infrequent, occurring in 16% of cases. Whilst this study provides more powerful evidence for the importance of evidence than those of Gudjonsson and colleagues, it

is still possible that confounds exist. For example, if the interviewing officer was aware that there was a great deal of evidence against the suspect, he or she may have been more relaxed and less aggressive during the interview, and this may have been an influence on the suspect's decision to confess (we return to the issue of officer demeanor in a later section). In the current research we will seek to address these confounds through an experimental design that assesses the impact of detail and accuracy of evidence on mock suspects' decisions to confess.

Finally, although it may seem to be tangential to the police interviewing literature, recent research into the polygraph also supports the assertion that presentation of convincing evidence has a crucial impact on suspects' decisions to confess. In one study, sex offenders were found to increase their reports of sexual deviancy, and were more likely to disclose adult and juvenile victims and offences against males and females, when they were in a polygraph group compared with a non-polygraph control (English, Jones, Patrick, & Cooley-Towell, 2000). Similarly, others have found that polygraphed offenders admit to more victims, increased numbers of offences, and an earlier onset of offending (Ahlymeyer, Heil, McKee, & English, 2000; Wilcox, 2000). The reason for these admissions appears to be that the offenders believe the polygraph will provide evidence to indicate that they are lying if they do not tell the truth, and hence can be construed as a form of strong evidence. Taken as a whole, the triangulation of the self-report, field, and experimental studies all point to the critical importance of presentation of evidence against a suspect.

The most frequent form of evidence against a suspect is an eyewitness account (Kebbell & Milne, 1998). Importantly, police interviewing can have a dramatic

impact on the quantity, quality, and accuracy of eyewitness accounts. A clear implication of this is that police officers should interview witnesses effectively, and in turn, present the obtained witness information effectively to the suspect. In particular, this means that police officers must not only interview effectively, but must also be sufficiently familiar with the evidence to present it effectively, something that requires preparation which is not always apparent (Baldwin, 1993). Interviewers are also required to remember what the evidence is, which is another area where they seem to have problems (Kohnken, Thurer, & Zoberbier, 1994).

The issue of presentation of evidence raises some intriguing empirical issues, for example, the issue of what suspects perceive to be strong evidence. Research with mock-jurors shows that the addition of peripheral details to an eyewitness' account to produce a more detailed account, increases jurors' perceptions of the strength of evidence against a defendant (Bell & Loftus, 1988; 1989). Potentially, presentation by police officers of additional peripheral witness information may increase a suspect's perception of the strength of the evidence against them. Participants may rationalize that the more detailed account represents stronger evidence against them and that they are likely to be convicted and so may as well confess.

Accuracy of evidence may also play a critical role. For example, in the third edition of their police interrogation training manual regarding the previously mentioned 'Reid Technique', Inbau, Reid and Buckley (1986) suggest fabricating evidence, such as non-existent eyewitnesses, in order to make the suspect more likely to confess. Importantly though, this technique raises clear ethical issues (discussed further later), and additionally, there is no available empirical evidence that suggests that fabricating

evidence is effective in increasing rates of confessions. Finally, if witness evidence is presented to a suspect that the suspect knows to be incorrect, this inaccurate evidence may reduce his or her willingness to confess. Potentially the offender may believe that he or she can prove the evidence is inaccurate, or that a jury will also be aware that the evidence is inaccurate, and so be unlikely to convict him or her. In turn, this may make suspects reluctant to confess because they think they can get away with their crime. Perhaps this possibility suggests that police officers should only present information that they are absolutely certain about.

2.4 POLICE INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES

The way that a police officer conducts an interview may also have a great influence on the likelihood of a confession, regardless of the evidence they present, and so we turn to this issue now. The work of Leo (1996) is particularly relevant here. He conducted a systematic evaluation of 182 suspect interviews in the United States that resulted in the most detailed documentation of how police officers interview, and the impact this has on suspects' decisions to confess. The majority of the cases analyzed were crimes against the person, for example, homicide, robbery, and assault, including sexual assault, though no data are presented specifically concerning sexual offences.

The study showed that police officers used a number of tactics frequently. The tactic used most often was an appeal to the suspect's self interest, which was used in 88% of cases, and confronting the suspect with existing evidence of guilt, which was used in 85% of cases. Other tactics were also used relatively often. These included, undermining the suspect's confidence in their denial of guilt (43% of cases),

identifying contradictions in the suspect's story (42% of cases), behavioral analysis questions such as behavioral indicators of guilt (40% of cases), an appeal to the importance of cooperation (37%), offering moral or psychological justifications (34%), confronting the suspect with false evidence of guilt (30%), the use of flattery or praise (30%), pointing out the detective's expertise or authority (29%), appealing to the suspect's conscience (23%), and minimizing the moral seriousness of the offence (22%).

Leo found that the length of interrogation and the number of tactics used were significantly related to the likelihood of a confession. Further, he found that a confession was significantly more likely when certain techniques were used. For example, when police officers appealed to a suspect's conscience they confessed significantly more often (confessions in 97% of cases). Similarly, confessions were frequent if police officers identified inconsistencies in suspects' stories (confessions in 91% of cases), used praise or flattery (confessions in 91% of cases), and offered moral justification and moral excuses (confessions in 90% of cases). Interestingly, confronting a suspect with *false* evidence of guilt (confessions in 83% of cases) or confronting a suspect with existing evidence of guilt (confessions in 78% of cases) was not significantly associated with confessions.

Unfortunately there are confounds in this data, as is often the case with field data. For example, it is reasonable to expect that police interviewers who interview for a long period of time are going to use more tactics, so the number of tactics used and the length of the interview are confounded. Importantly, police officers may interview more confidently where there is strong evidence because they feel less pressure to

achieve a confession, and clearly this is relevant to many of the techniques (e.g., pointing out inconsistencies in the case). In turn, in these situations they might be more relaxed, and so less aggressive to the suspect, which could impact on suspects' decisions to confess. Nevertheless, the results of the previously mentioned study by Gudjonsson and Petursson (1991) indicate that 40% gave a "very much so" rating to the question. "Did you confess because you felt guilty about the offence? (Although 38% responded "not at all" to this question). This suggests that many suspects confess to get things "off their chest", supporting some of the assertions made by Leo (1996).

The survey of 83 men convicted of murder or sexual offenses by Holmberg and Christianson (2002) is also especially relevant here. They found aggression, hostility, and insulting and condemning behavior, which they labeled "dominance", reduced the likelihood of a confession. However, friendliness, the suspect feeling acknowledged and respected as a human being, and a feeling of cooperation, which they labeled "humanity", were associated with increases in the numbers of confessions.

Perhaps the lack of effectiveness of dominance may be due to 'psychological reactance' (Brehm, 1966). Brehm showed that when individuals perceive an unfair restriction on their actions, in this case their ability to deny an offence or give their own account of an event, an intense motivational state is produced that means the individual attempts to challenge the restriction, and obtain the denied item, choice or behaviour. In other words, we want what we can't have. In an interview situation characterized by dominance and pressure to confess, psychological reactance is likely to take the form of a decision to deny the alleged offence and to terminate the discussion with the interviewing officer. Furthermore, Holmberg (2004) points out

that an extensive literature on attitudes indicates that if an individual perceives himself or herself to be emotionally threatened, ego-defense may occur (Katz, 1960). In these circumstances, once the suspect has become suspicious, then it may prove very difficult to change their mind, and they are likely to be far more critical of any further information that is generated by the police officer. Conversely, the fact that the humanistic approach can be successful could be explicable in terms of offenders feeling more comfortable with the officer, and thus, more able to reduce their guilt and to get things off their chest, particularly compared to an officer who displays dominance.

Again, however, there is a problem with the correlational nature of this study, which makes it impossible to determine a causal relationship between these variables and outcomes. For example, offenders could be more likely to confess because officers responded positively to them, or alternatively, officers could have responded more positively to the offenders *because* they were confessing, at this stage we do not know for sure. There may also be problems with this data, as it is self-report data. The problem of confounds here will be addressed in the current research via an experimental design which presents convicted sex offenders with vignettes designed to assess the impact of humanity, dominance, and an understanding of cognitive distortions on a suspect's likelihood of confessing or denying. This is described later.

As mentioned previously, the correlational nature of most field studies reduces the inferences that can be drawn. To date, in contrast to the false-confession literature where experimental methods are having an increasingly important impact (for example see, Horselenberg, Merckelbach, & Josephs, 2003; Kassin, & Kiechel, 1996),

little laboratory-based research has been conducted on suspect interviews where the suspect is actually guilty. One exception is an innovative study by Russano, Meissner, Narchet, and Kassin (2005). In this experiment, participants were asked by a confederate to help “cheat” in an experimental task. Most did so and were later accused of cheating by the experimenter.

Russano, Meissner, Narchet, and Kassin (2005) used two conditions. In one, labeled the “minimization” condition, the interrogator was instructed to express sympathy and concern (e.g., “I’m sure you didn’t realize what a big deal it was”). In the other condition, labeled the “deal” condition, the experimenter told participants that if they signed a confession then, “things would probably be settled pretty quickly”, they would receive their research credit for the day but would have to return and do the experiment again, however, if they did not confess they were told the professor in charge of the experiment would come, and it was implied the consequences could be more severe. The results indicated that without any tactics 46% of the guilty participants confessed. However, these figures increased to 72% and 81% in the deal and minimization conditions, respectively. Importantly, when both a deal and minimization were combined, the confession rate was 87%. Whilst clearly, caution must be used in extrapolating from this experimental study, the implications are that offering a deal, and minimization, are likely to be critical to suspects’ decisions to confess.

It is important to note here, that while minimization does seem to have the potential to improve confession rates, the concept of ‘minimization’ is still somewhat broad. For example, on the one hand minimization could include suggesting to the suspect that

the victim encouraged the attack, which, if not true, could be considered unethical police interviewing behavior (we will return to the issue of ethics later). On the other hand, a police officer could state that the attack was not the worst he had ever seen, which is a more ethical form of minimization, if it is also true, and perhaps should be more accurately labeled normalization.

The issue of minimization and normalization appears to be an important avenue of research in reducing the stigma associated with sex offending in particular (Bhaghwan, 2003; McGrath, 1990; Quinn, Forsyth, & Mullen-Quinn, 2004). An example of one way of reducing stigma is given by Pearse and Gudjonsson (1999) where a female officer said the following,

So were you playing with your penis? I'm married, I've got a husband, I know men and men do masturbate. It's not an unusual thing so don't, I know it's probably not easy for you to talk in front of me but I've heard all this before and there's nothing you're going to say that's going to shock me so don't, try not to feel embarrassed. I know it's not easy for you (p. 238).

Immediately after this, the suspect admitted he was playing with his penis.

Another form of minimization is demonstrating an understanding of cognitive distortions. Some offenders may have particularly distorted ways of thinking about their victims, which supports their offending (Swaffer, Hollin, Beech, Beckett, & Fisher, 1999; Ward, Hudson, Johnston, & Marshall, 1997). For example, many who offend against children agree with statements such as, "Having sex with a child is a good way for an adult to teach the child about sex", "A child who doesn't physically resist an adult's sexual advances, really wants to have sex with the adult", and "when

a young child walks in front of me with no or only a few clothes on, she is trying to arouse me” (Abel, Gore, Holland, Camp, Becker, & Rathner, 1989).

Unfortunately, police officers may have little insight and understanding of these cognitions (which are essentially a form of minimization for the offender). Perhaps an effective strategy would be for the interviewing officer to develop an understanding of common cognitive distortions, and to present an understanding of these distortions to the suspect (without actually condoning them). This may be effective in gaining confessions for two reasons. Firstly, because it shows a level of understanding of the suspect’s thinking. Secondly, if the officer talks about these distortions without becoming angry it suggests to the suspect that the officer is less likely to become aggressive if he confesses to the crime. For example, an officer may say, “I know some people think that when a young child walks in front of them with no or only a few clothes on, she is trying to arouse them. Perhaps that is how you felt?” Of course understanding the offenders’ thinking is not the same as condoning it. The above approach differs from the less ethical approach advocated by Inbau, Reid and Buckley (1986) who suggest officers say they have thought about committing the same crime, or that the committal of the crime is understandable. Ethical forms of minimization or normalization, and understanding cognitive distortions, are of particular interest in the current research.

Further, contrary to minimization is the concept of maximization. According to Kassin and McNall (1991) interrogation manuals such as that of Inbau, Reid and Buckley (1986) that is based on the “Reid” model (Jayne, 1986), tend to suggest two main categories of interrogation techniques that are designed to obtain confessions;

these are minimization and maximization. Generally, maximization refers to techniques designed to scare a suspect into confessing or to convince a suspect that a denial is not attractive or feasible, while minimization refers to techniques designed to lull a suspect into a false sense of security, so that the negative possible outcomes associated with a confession appear to be reduced (Kassin & McNall, 1991). Examples of maximization include implying that the suspect will inevitably be found guilty, or that the suspect will experience worse consequences if they do not confess, while examples of minimization include providing the suspect with some form of justification or an excuse for their offending, which makes their offending seem less severe or morally wrong, and hence easier to confess to (Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004; Kassin & McNall, 1991). Clearly, these two categories can be easily linked to the decision making model of confessions, as they are designed to make a denial less appealing, and a confession more appealing to the suspect. Each of these variables is included in the current research.

Next is the issue of the timing of confessions or denials. Baldwin (1993) conducted a field study in the U.K. He evaluated 600 video and audio-taped suspect interviews. While many of his findings concur with those of Leo (1996), Baldwin's study provides additional information. Importantly, Baldwin (1993) studied suspects' admissions and denials, as well as when they occurred. Full confessions, or confessions to some part of the allegation, occurred immediately in 51.9% of interviews, while 32.7% denied immediately and continued that denial throughout the interview. Baldwin (1993) found that 2.3% denied at first but subsequently admitted some part of the allegation, 4.2% denied but did shift their position during the interview, and 3.3% completely changed their account and confessed. This could be

taken to suggest that police interviewing has little impact on suspects' decisions to confess or deny, and that the suspect has usually decided beforehand whether they will confess to or deny the allegation. An alternative possibility however, is that a suspect may decide early in the interview whether they will confess or deny and then subsequently rarely deviate from this decision. This seems plausible. An extensive social psychological literature shows a "commitment bias", whereby people remain committed to an initial position even when extensive evidence suggests they should change their position (e.g., Edwards & Smith, 1996). For criminal suspects in particular, changing an account is even more difficult than usual, as they must not only change their position but also admit that their previous account was false and that they lied to the police. One technique that the police could use is to ask the suspect not to comment immediately but rather, advise them to listen to the evidence before speaking. This technique has been suggested by Inbau, Reid and Buckley (1986) in their interrogation manual mentioned previously. Based on the above, the timing of a suspect's decision to confess or deny in relation to an investigative interview will be tested in the current research.

Finally, the Baldwin (1993) study is also relevant to this chapter, because of his assertions concerning the quality of police interviews. Baldwin identified a discrepancy between how the police *say* they interview and how they *actually* interview. Baldwin (1993) stated that the police officers in their sample often spoke of high-level psychological concepts that they applied in their interviewing, but in reality their interviewing showed little evidence of this. The fact that some offenders (particularly sex offenders) have personality deficits (e.g., Fisher, Beech, & Browne, 1999) may make interviewing more difficult, because of the suspect's poor

interpersonal skills. Of course, if the interviewing officer also has poor interpersonal skills, it is unlikely that the interview will be effective. Clearly, one implication of this is that police officers with good interpersonal skills may be better at this work.

2.5 ETHICAL ISSUES AND FALSE CONFESSIONS

As argued previously in this chapter, offenders are more likely to confess if they perceive there is strong and accurate evidence that they committed the crime. The obvious implication of this is that police interviewers should, prior to the suspect interview, establish strong evidence that suggests the suspects' guilt, and then present that evidence effectively to the suspect during the interview. As argued previously, some practitioners have suggested that this may be achieved by fabricating evidence (For example, Inbau, Reid & Buckley, 1986). Importantly though, there is no available empirical evidence that suggests that fabricating evidence is effective in increasing rates of confession. Further, such fabrications could lead to an increase in the likelihood of an innocent individual making a false-confession.

Research shows that false confessions can be a problem. This is indicated by a number of people in the United States who confessed to serious crimes, such as rape and murder, only to be exonerated by the discovery of DNA evidence that showed they could not have committed the offence (or their offences have otherwise been shown to be false, see Connors, Lundregan, Miller, & McEwan, 1996; Gudjonsson, 2003; Huff, Rattner & Sagarin, 1996). Again, this must be taken into account in police interviewing. There is an extensive literature concerning false confessions, though this will not be reviewed here as it has been done so well elsewhere (e.g., Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004; Gudjonsson, 2003). Of course, no consideration of police

interviewing is complete or acceptable without reference to the false confession literature.

Also, it is particularly important to remember, that not all people who are suspected of committing offences are actually guilty. For example, some victims identify the wrong person as an offender (Connors, Lundregan, Miller, & McEwan, 1996), and although specific figures are difficult to come by, it is also clear that some individuals, perhaps a small minority, make malicious allegations, for example in cases concerning sexual offences (Oates, Jones, Denson, Sirotnak, Gary & Krugman, 2000). In these cases suspects are likely to be particularly sensitive to the way in which they are interviewed, and this must be borne in mind in devising effective and ethical police interviewing techniques.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, the state of our knowledge concerning effectively and ethically interviewing suspected offenders and increasing rates of confession, has been summarized. As argued previously, there are three key benefits to an offender confessing, including an increased likelihood of a conviction, the decreased likelihood of a victim being required to testify, and the reduction in costs associated with a lengthy trial and prosecution. We have presented an overview of theoretical models which can assist us in understanding why suspects decide to confess or deny an alleged crime, and have demonstrated how these models can be used to develop effective interviewing techniques. In addition to the above, we have also reviewed the literature regarding suspect interviewing and factors associated with confessions, and have presented important findings with a variety of implications.

The remainder of this report is devoted to presenting the four separate research studies that were designed and implemented as part of this research grant. To reiterate, the main research variables under investigation in this report are humanity, dominance, an understanding of cognitive distortions, minimization, maximization, ethical interviewing, and accuracy and detail of evidence.

Specifically, in chapter three we present a qualitative study concerning semi-structured interviews with convicted sex offenders. The study is focused upon convicted sex offenders' perspectives of police interviewing and factors they believe to be associated with decisions to confess or deny offences. In chapter four we present a quantitative, correlational, and experimental study concerning sex offenders' and non-sexual violent offenders' perspectives of police interviewing, and interviewing techniques associated with mock offenders' decisions to confess or deny their offences. In chapter five we present an experimental study that examines the impact of accuracy and detail of evidence on mock-suspects' decisions to confess. In chapter six we present a qualitative study concerning semi-structured interviews with police officers that interview suspected sex offenders. Finally, in chapter seven, we review and summarize the general findings of the research and discuss the implications of these findings.

CHAPTER 3. STUDY ONE

3.1 CONVICTED SEX OFFENDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE INTERVIEWING: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

To date, few researchers have asked sex offenders specifically about their experience of being interviewed by the police particularly via qualitative research and semi-structured interviews. Instead, they have relied on questionnaire approaches (e.g., Holmberg & Christianson, 2002; Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 2000).

A qualitative approach would however seem to have particular benefits. Sex offenders who have been interviewed by the police are uniquely placed to comment on their own reasons for confessing or denying, and to comment on how the police can enhance their interviewing to increase the likelihood of other offenders confessing. This information can be used to inform police officers' interviewing of suspected sex offenders. Further, sex offenders may also have useful information concerning desirable attributes for police officers that are interviewing suspected sex offenders. The use of open questions and semi structured interviews could also prove beneficial, as it might allow researchers to identify other variables that influence confessions and denials which have not yet been identified by previous research.

In light of the above, in this study convicted sex offenders were asked about their experiences of being interviewed by the police and their suggestions for improving police interviewing of sex offenders in future. From the literature on sexual offending and the decision-making model mentioned in the previous chapter, it was possible to make four predictions.

First, sex offenders will experience high levels of guilt and worry when interviewed about their offences by the police, particularly due to society's strong condemnatory attitudes towards sexual offences (Bhagwan, 2003; Gudjonsson & Sigurdsson, 2000).

Second, consistent with the arguments of Holmberg and Christianson (2002) and the predictions of the decision making model, sex offenders will say that they, and other sex offenders, will be more likely to confess to officers who are calm and who adopt a gentle and open-minded approach, because this reduces the consequences of their confession in terms of a negative reaction from the interviewing officer, while conversely, officers who are angry, aggressive and biased will be perceived as less likely to obtain confessions.

Third, consistent with the findings of Gudjonsson and Petursson (1991), many sex offenders will report that the strength of the evidence against them was a major factor in their decision to confess.

Fourth, in line with the decision making model, sex offenders will emphasize the importance of police officers being professional, understanding, calm, and mature, as this could reduce the negative social consequences of a confession.

3.2 METHOD

3.2.1 Participants

The participants were 19 male inmates of a Correctional Centre. Each participant had been convicted of a sexual offence, and had been interviewed by police officers

concerning the offence. Their mean age was 49.8 years (SD=12.8), with a range of 28 to 72.

Ten participants were serving sentences for non-familial sexual offences against children, two were serving sentences for familial sexual offences against children, and seven were serving sentences for sexual offences against adult women. The mean sentence was 7 years 10 months (SD = 12.8 months), with a range from four years to 13 years. Thirteen had no previous convictions, three had previous convictions for non-sexual offences, and three had previous convictions for non-sexual and sexual offences. At the time of conducting this research, 17 of the 19 participants had confessed to their offence or admitted their guilt, while 2 continued to deny culpability

3.2.2 Procedure

Before interviewing and data collection began, a member of staff at the Correctional Centre was recruited to review the files of potential participants. To qualify, the potential participant had to have been convicted of a sexual offence, and had to acknowledge undergoing an interview with the police concerning this offence. The first 21 offenders that met the above criteria were approached by the staff member, told the purpose of the research, and asked if they would be willing to participate. A clear statement was provided to the participants assuring them that the interviewers were not employees of the Department of Corrections or the Police Service, and that participation would not influence their treatment whilst in the correctional centre. All 21 agreed to participate, though two participants were excluded from the study because they denied being interviewed by the police.

Participants were informed that the interview would be tape-recorded if they consented, and that they were ensured anonymity and confidentiality so long as they did not make any credible threats to commit further crimes, and did not disclose information about a crime for which they had not yet been convicted. Participants were told they had the right to stop the interview at any time without penalty. They were also told they did not have to answer any of the questions they were asked if they felt uncomfortable.

Participants were interviewed individually in a private interview room within the Correctional Centre, by either one or two interviewers. The interview rooms contained tables and chairs only. At all stages, the door to the room remained closed, to ensure the participants' privacy and confidentiality. With the permission of the interviewee, the interview was recorded on cassette tape. Eighteen of the 19 participants provided consent for their interview to be tape-recorded.

The interviews were semi-structured, and each participant was asked the same standard set of questions, though where necessary, elaboration and clarification was sought. All of the 19 participants' responses were recorded in a questionnaire by the interviewer. For brevity, an overview of the questionnaire is provided here, while more details concerning specific questions asked are included in the results section that follows.

Questions asked in this research were informed by the aforementioned literature on sexual offences and offenders' decisions to confess or deny their alleged crimes. Information was requested concerning how the participant felt during the police

interview, what the participants thought the police did well or badly throughout the interview, whether they confessed or denied, their reasons for doing so, and the perceived benefits of confessing to or denying a crime. Additional questions were asked to gain information from the participants regarding how they believed police interviewing could be improved, including questions concerning what the police could do to increase or decrease the likelihood of a sex offender confessing. Participants were also asked to comment on characteristics that are desirable for police interviewers to have. Inter-rater reliability was checked for two participants. Each comment was coded independently and agreement and disagreement recorded. Reliability was calculated from this and was acceptably high at 91%.

3.3 RESULTS

3.3.1 Sex Offenders' Feelings During The Interview

Participants were asked, "How did you feel during the police interview?" Participants reported experiencing a variety of feelings that could be coded into six separate categories. These were 'anxious' (e.g., "Complete state of nervousness...thinking of what else will come up, thinking of coming to jail, how the media was going to handle it", and, "Nervous. I felt I was trapped...in parts there I was fearful, I thought it would never end"), 'shocked and confused' (e.g., "I was a bit shocked by what was happening...that it was me there and I was being interrogated by the police..." and, "I think I was more in shock than anything"), 'tired' ("...I had to work the night shift too, which made me feel a bit detached..." and "It just seemed to go on and on and on, I just wanted it to end"), 'conflicted' ("There was two lots of feelings, one part was saying I'm really glad this is finally being dealt with, and another part, I really don't want to come to jail...I was scared of that part", and "All over the place,

worried about what might happen, on the other hand I didn't really care... it was a mix"), 'upset' (e.g., "pretty upsetting feelings", and "upset, scared... I was worried for my kids..."), and 'guilty' (e.g., "remorseful feelings, empathy with the victim...").

Overall, 14 (73.7%) participants reported feeling anxious, six (31.6%) reported feeling shocked and confused, three (15.8%) reported feeling tired, two (10.5%) reported feeling conflicted, two (10.5%) reported feeling upset, and one (5.3%) reported feeling guilty. One (5.3%) participant reported that he felt "just normal things."

3.3.2 Evidence against the Offender

Participants were asked, "What was the evidence against you?" Six (31.6%) stated that the only available evidence was a victim statement. For one (5.3%) participant the only available evidence was his own confession. In total, only two (10.5%) other participants were convicted without a victim statement. In one of these cases the evidence was his computer that showed that the suspect had solicited sex with an underage girl, as well as photographic evidence. For the other participant, the evidence was obtained from a police interview conducted in another jurisdiction concerning different charges. For the remaining nine (47.4%) participants, there was a combination of evidence available. In four (21.1%) of these cases, the evidence included a victim statement as well as their own confession, in another four (21.1%) cases the evidence included a victim statement and some other corroborating evidence such as a witness statement, transcripts of threats, and DNA evidence. One (5.3%) participant knew that a victim statement was utilised, but was unsure of the additional

evidence in the case. Finally, one participant (5.3%) did not wish to answer this question.

3.3.3 Suspects' Decisions to Confess or Deny

Participants were asked questions to determine whether they confessed or denied. Three (15.8%) participants initially denied their guilt regarding the offence, one (5.3%) participant neither denied nor confessed, and two (10.5%) participants denied some aspect of their offence. The remaining 13 (68.4%) participants made no attempt to deny their guilt to the police. Ten (52.6%) participants reported they had made no plans to confess or deny before the police interview started. Of the nine (47.4%) participants who had made a plan prior to the start of the interview, six (31.6%) had planned to confess, while only three (15.8%) had planned to deny. At the end of the police interviews 17 (89.5%) had confessed and two (10.5%) continued to deny.

3.3.4 Sex Offenders' Reasons for Wanting To Confess or Deny

Participants were asked, "What reasons did you have for wanting to confess?" Reasons for wanting to confess could be categorised into seven separate categories. These were 'guilt' (e.g. "Sick of my own behaviour. It was playing on my mind all the time. The guilt, everything", and "it was playing on my conscience"), 'truth' (e.g. "because I'd done it, it was true", and "just thought it was the right thing to do"), 'evidence' (e.g. "They mentioned a group of boys, it wasn't just my word against the main boy", and "because they brought the evidence forward, they came to speak to me about a complaint and that is why I spoke to them..."), 'closure' (e.g. "I wanted to bring it all out in the open, because I had a lot more to bring out. I had to deal with my offences, and I had to deal with my own childhood as well", and "I just wanted to

come clean and get it over and done with”), ‘give own account’ (e.g. “to tell them exactly what did go on...I wanted to get it straight in my mind, and tell them exactly what was going on...”), ‘sparing the victim’ (e.g. “I didn’t want to take the victim through a trial”), and ‘leniency’ (e.g. “I thought if I was honest with them it would go better in the long-run... a more lenient sentence”). Also, there were three answers that did not fit into any of the above categories. These were, specified as ‘religious reasons’, ‘my dignity’, and being intoxicated at the time of the interview. Some participants listed more than one option.

Overall, six (31.6%) participants answered ‘guilt’, five (26.3%) stated ‘truth’, two (10.5%) stated ‘evidence’, two (10.5%) reported ‘closure’, one (5.3%) stated ‘give own account’, one (5.3%) emphasised ‘sparing the victim’, and one (5.3%) reported ‘leniency’. Two (10.5%) participants reported that they didn’t confess.

Participants were also asked, “What reasons did you have for wanting to deny?” Some participants provided more than one answer to this question. Overall answers could be categorised into four categories, namely ‘avoidance’ (e.g. “I didn’t want to go to jail...I wanted to continue my lifestyle”, and “I thought I could get away with it”), ‘innocence’ (e.g. “didn’t do it...I believed at the time”, and “the only reason I would deny is if I didn’t do it”), ‘inaccurate charges’ (e.g. “the offences were rape, but I maintained all along that it was a consenting relationship”), and ‘concern for others’ (e.g. “the effects it would have on my family”). Overall, seven (36.8%) reported ‘avoidance’, three (15.8%) reported ‘innocence’, one (5.3%) reported ‘inaccurate charges’ and one (5.3%) participant reported ‘concern for others’. Finally, nine (47.4%) participants reported that they didn’t deny, or else had no reason for doing so.

3.3.5 Sex Offenders' Perceived Benefits of Confessing and Denying

Participants were asked, “What do you think are the benefits of confessing?” Though participants often gave several answers to this question, overall seven categories of answers could be recognised. These were ‘guilt’ (e.g. “To get it off your chest. You can be more at ease. Get rid of that burden”, and “Took a lot off my mind. It was a relief to tell them what they didn’t know”), ‘leniency’ (e.g. “Lesser sentence, the only thing you do get from confessing is a lesser sentence”, and “Usually the Judge is more lenient”), ‘expedience’ (e.g. “the truth all comes out at once”, “it goes quicker through trial”), ‘ease’ (e.g. “You don’t have any pressure to have to out-think people”, “you can just deal with it...not hiding all the time”, and “once you start lying, you have to make certain you get your story right”), ‘avoid wasting resources’ (e.g. “it gives the police more time to deal with other crimes”, and “you are not wasting the court’s time”), ‘concern for the victim’ (e.g. “you also have to think about the effect it may have on the victim”), and ‘avoidance’ (e.g. “prevents the trauma of a court proceedings”).

Overall, nine (47.4%) participants reported ‘guilt’, seven (36.8%) emphasised ‘leniency’, four (21.1%) reported ‘expedience’, four (21.1%) reported ‘ease’, two (10.5%) emphasised ‘avoid wasting resources’, one (5.3%) reported ‘concern for the victim’, and one (5.3%) reported ‘avoidance’.

Participants were also asked, “What do you think are the benefits of denying?” Participants provided fairly consistent answers to this question. Answers could be divided into two key categories, including ‘avoidance’ (e.g. “the only benefits of denying are possibly to get a lesser sentence or avoid going to prison”, “getting away

with what you have done”, and “If I had denied, and won the case, then I wouldn’t be here”), and ‘innocence’ (e.g. “if you didn’t do it”, and “just for the truth to come out, if you believe you are innocent, just for the truth to come out”).

Overall, five participants (26.3%) reported ‘avoidance’ as a benefit of denying, and three (15.8%) stated that the only benefit of denying is to attempt to prove your innocence. Three (15.8%) participants provided mixed answers. One (5.3%) of these participants stated that there are no benefits to denying, though he personally attempted avoidance initially, and the remaining two (10.5%) participants specified that there aren’t any benefits to denying if you are guilty, but if you are innocent there are clear benefits. The remaining eight (42.1%) participants stated that there are no benefits to denying at all (e.g., “there are no benefits really, you are going to be found out eventually”, and “there are none really...it really gets you nowhere”).

3.3.6 Sex Offenders’ Suggestions for Improving Police Interviewing Skills

Participants were asked to provide suggestions regarding how the police could increase the likelihood of confessions or denials during police interviews. These questions and selected participant responses to each are listed next. Participants were asked, “What sorts of things might interviewers do or say that would make people more likely to confess?” Typically, participants’ answers could be divided into eight categories. These are ‘procedural aspects’ (e.g. “go and find other people they can bring in...trawling...they know if it is one person, it is their word against yours, if they have many victims there is a better chance of a conviction”, and, “the only thing they could put in front of them is the evidence, their past history...possibly offer them

lenient sentences just to see if it will help them out with their story”), ‘compassion’ (e.g., “to be compassionate...be understanding. When people commit a crime, there are typically factors underlying that crime...” and “police officers could be more understanding...instead of coming on to you like you are the worst of the worst), ‘neutrality’ (e.g., “I think if they made them feel relaxed, not judged. The usual thing to do would be to make people feel more open...” and, “ask their side of the story, try to find more evidence”), ‘clear’ (e.g., “perhaps if they explained things more... the evidence against the accused, and explained what the process was going to be, what the outcome may be...If they had explained things to me more fully...” and, “probably explain themselves a bit better...”), ‘non-aggressive’ (“It doesn’t matter what the crime is, they should go in gently...go in more relaxed”, and, “I don’t see why people that have allegations put against them, should have to sit there and cop their taunts, over something they know they haven’t done”), ‘honesty’ (e.g. “you don’t need the police to try and con you...I think that instead of saying that they have something when they don’t... I think they should be more honest about it”, “just be upfront about it”), ‘coercive tactics’ (e.g. “just put more pressure on you I suppose, more pressure...go over and over your statement until you, they come up with the right answer”), and ‘professionalism’ (“be professional”).

Overall, four (21.1%) participants suggested ‘procedural aspects’, while ‘compassion’, ‘neutrality’, and ‘clear’ were each suggested by three (15.8%) participants, and ‘non-aggressive’ and ‘honesty’ were suggested by two (10.5%) participants each. Only one (5.3%) participant each suggested ‘coercive tactics’ or ‘professionalism’. Four (21.1%) participants had difficulty finding suggestions. One (5.3%) of these participants stated, “police used to use violence, but social attitudes

have changed”, and another stated, “I couldn’t answer that... a person is either going to confess or he is not”.

Participants were also asked, “What sorts of things might interviewers do or say that would make people more likely to deny?” Participants’ responses to this question could be divided into six categories. These are ‘aggressive behaviour’ (e.g. “being extremely aggressive”, and, “if they had been more aggressive...if you are aggressive towards people, they tend to get their back up. They dig in, they say, well I’m not going to tell you what you want to know”), ‘bias’ (e.g. “not asking their side of the story” and, “overly opinionated without the facts”), ‘pressuring’ (e.g. “apply pressure”, and, “the worst thing I found was that they kept saying that the longer you hold out, the longer this interview will take...”), ‘inaccurate charges’ (e.g. “accuse you of things you know you didn’t do”, and, “the overkill...hitting you with more charges or offences than you did”), ‘insufficient evidence’ (e.g. “not having evidence, like a victim’s statement”), and ‘poor questioning’ (e.g. “the questions they ask...sometimes they are not relevant to the crime...sometimes they spear off, and that sort of throws things out a bit”).

Overall, 12 (63.2%) out of the 19 participants suggested ‘aggressive behaviour’, while four (21.1%) suggested ‘bias’, three (15.8%) suggested ‘pressuring’ and two (10.5%) suggested ‘inaccurate charges’. Only one (5.3%) participant suggested either ‘insufficient evidence’ or ‘poor questioning’. Finally, three (15.8%) participants had difficulty answering the question, and four (21.1%) participants acknowledged that the answer would depend on the individual involved (e.g. “it may depend on the

person, but some people may give in to aggression, others may go the other way...just to be a pain...some cower others explode”).

3.3.7 Desirable Personalities, Characteristics, and Demographics of Police Interviewers

The participants were asked two questions to ascertain the most desirable characteristics and personalities of police interviewers. These were, “What do you think are the most important characteristics for an interviewer to have?” and, “What kind of personality should they have?” Answers were similar for both questions so we report both together.

Answers could be categorised as ‘capable’ (for example, “be able to do his job at the right level, be able to adapt himself to different situations”), ‘approachable’ (for example, “a personality the interviewee can relate to...” and “an easy approachable attitude”), ‘understanding’ (for example, “someone that can understand what that person is going through, and why they done it...”), ‘calm’ (e.g. “just go with the flow, go with what they’ve got, be easy going, don’t force things out of you...”), ‘non-aggressive’ (e.g. “they don’t have to be aggressive, they can be friendly” and “be a bit more friendlier than they are, not to be so aggressive towards the people they are interviewing”), ‘neutral’ (e.g. “they should interview without judging beforehand...and even if they feel ill towards them, they should just put that to one side and simply go through the evidence...”), ‘respectful’ (e.g. “courteous”, “polite”, “it should just be the good old policeman interviewing a suspect”), ‘assertive’ (e.g. “may need to be firm and assertive in their role”, and “they should be confident...”), ‘honest’ (e.g. “honesty...from both sides”, and “they are supposed to have

integrity...”), ‘professionalism’ (e.g. “Professionalism. If you are talking to a professional person, then you feel more at ease...you can develop more of a rapport with a professional officer, and respect”), ‘empathy’ (e.g. “have empathy with the person they are talking with”), ‘good listener’ (e.g. “be able to listen, and ask the right questions” and “be prepared to listen, even if you don’t really agree with what is said”), ‘interpersonal skills’ (e.g. “people skills”), ‘considerate’ (e.g. “They should offer you coffee breaks, so that you can recover yourself a bit”), ‘clear’ (e.g. “explain what is going to happen, and the likely outcomes”), and finally, ‘resilience’ (e.g. “the police have a hard job to do...need resilience to deal with or cope with the confronting details...and evidence”).

Overall, nine (47.4%) participants selected ‘capable’, eight (42.1%) selected ‘approachable’, and seven (36.8%) selected ‘understanding’. ‘Calm’ and ‘non-aggressive’ were selected by five (26.3%) participants each, ‘neutral’, ‘respectful’ and ‘assertive’ were identified by four (21.1%) participants each, and ‘honesty’, ‘professionalism’, ‘empathy’ and ‘good listener’ were identified by three (15.8%) participants each. Two (10.5%) participants highlighted the importance of ‘interpersonal skills’, while ‘considerate’, ‘clear’, and ‘resilience’, were reported by only one (5.3%) participant each.

Participants were asked, “What age should they be?” Of the 19 participants, one (5.3%) believed police should be at least 20 years old or over, seven (36.8%) believed they should be at least 30 years or over, while five (26.3%) believed they should be above 40 years old, or ‘middle aged’. The level of work and life experience of the officer was often cited as the main reason for preferring older police interviewers. The

remaining six participants (31.6%) believed that age was not important, or stated that it would depend on the preferences of the individual suspect.

Participants were asked, “What gender should they be?” Twelve (63.2%) participants believed that the gender of the police interviewer wouldn’t matter, or that it would depend on the preferences of each suspect. Two participants (10.5%) believed they should be male, two (10.5%) believed there should be both male and female officers present, while three (15.8%) participants specified that for male suspects there should be male officers, and for female suspects there should be female officers.

3.4 DISCUSSION

Participants typically reported feeling anxious and upset and participants’ responses indicated that about half had not decided whether they would confess or deny before they were interviewed. This indicates that interviewing officers have considerable potential to influence whether an offender confesses or denies. Participants’ own reasons for confessing were similar to those reported by Gudjonsson and Petursson (1991) with a greater frequency of participants mentioning feelings of guilt, and a smaller proportion mentioning the strength of evidence (we return to the issue of evidence later).

Concerning reasons why an offender should confess, participants emphasised the importance of confessing to receive a more lenient sentence, that it was easier than denying, and that they would feel less guilty afterwards. They suggested that for

police officers to obtain more confessions they should adopt a fair, compassionate, non-aggressive, and honest approach.

When participants were also asked about reasons for denying the most frequent reason was to avoid being convicted of crimes they have or have not committed suggesting that police officers should be cautious of accusing individuals of crimes where there is little evidence. Importantly some emphasised that exaggerating offences also made them think about denying, as they felt the interview process was not fair. The most frequent response concerning what the police could do that would make people less likely to confess was the police being aggressive. Nevertheless, a small minority of participants felt that some might give in to aggression.

Only two participants mentioned that the evidence against them was a major reason for them confessing and only one mentioned that a lack of evidence would be a reason for not confessing. Nevertheless, in all the cases except one, there was evidence against the offender, other than a confession, and in the majority of cases this was eyewitness evidence, suggesting that evidence may well play an important part in suspects' decisions to confess or deny.

Participants identified a number of characteristics that they felt were desirable for good police interviewers. Participants suggested police officers should be capable, approachable, show high levels of empathy and understanding and the ability to be a good listener. Participants also emphasised the importance of an interviewer being calm, non-aggressive, fair and respectful as well as assertive. The majority emphasised the importance of maturity and said that gender was not important, with a

small minority preferring the interviewing officer to be male for male offenders.

Taken together this indicates what factors may be important in selecting police interviewers.

CHAPTER 4. STUDY TWO

4.1 CONVICTED SEX OFFENDERS PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE INTERVIEWING: A QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, there are many factors that may impact on a sex offenders' decision to admit or deny their offending. Based on the decision-making model of confessions, and the results of the qualitative study outlined in the previous chapter, the current study is designed to examine the following strategies associated with police interviewing of suspected offenders: humanity, dominance, minimization, maximization, understanding of cognitive distortions, strength of evidence, and ethical interviewing.

In this study, each of the seven categories of interviewing strategies addressed above is examined via a structured design. The variables of humanity, dominance and an understanding of cognitive distortions are also examined via an experimental design with the use of vignettes to triangulate the reliability and validity of any results. In this study a control group of non-sexual violent offenders has been introduced in order to identify any unique characteristics and factors associated with sex offenders. The operationalisation of the research variables will be discussed in more detail in the method section of this chapter.

As discussed in the introductory chapter, our hypotheses were that ethical interviewing, humanity, minimization, maximization, evidence, and displays of understanding of cognitive distortions would be associated with increased likelihood

and perceived likelihood of confession, whilst dominance would be associated with reduced likelihood and perceived likelihood of confession.

4.2 METHOD

4.2.1 Participants

Participants were 60 male inmates of three State correctional centers who had been convicted of either a sexual crime (test group) or a non-sexual violent crime (control group). Approximately 200 offenders were contacted by letter or in person and asked to participate in the study, and 61 agreed to take part. Due to safety concerns one man was excluded from the research and so the final sample consisted of 44 sex offenders and 16 violent non-sex offenders.

Regarding the test group, mean participant age was 45.54 years ($SD=12.62$), with a range of 23 to 79 years. The specific sexual offence for which participants had been convicted varied widely from 'Indecent dealings, Child under 16 years' to 'Sodomy' and 'Rape'. The mean length of sentence was 6.49 years ($SD=3.26$), ranging from 1 to 20 years. Mean number of victims was 1.76 ($SD=1.24$), ranging from 1 to 7.

Four participants offended against adults, while the remaining 40 participants offended against children aged 6 to 15 years. Approximately 81.1% of the victims were female, and 18.9% were male. Six participants (17%) had at least one victim with an intellectual disability.

Regarding the relationships between the sex offending participants and their victim(s), 17 offenders (38.6%) were intra-familial offenders (e.g., offending against their own

children or stepchildren), 16 (36.4%) were extra-familial offenders (e.g., offending against unrelated children), and 7 (15.9%) were mixed type offenders (e.g., offending against their own children or stepchildren, as well as their children's friends or neighbors). Data was unavailable for four (9.1%) participants.

Finally, regarding the test group, 3 participants had a prior conviction for a sexual offence, 6 had convictions for non-sexual non-violent offences, 6 had convictions for both violent, and non-violent non-sexual offences, and 11 had prior convictions for a variety of sexual and non-sexual offences (including both violent and non-violent offences). Nine participants had no recorded prior convictions, and data was unavailable for a further 9 participants. Regarding the control group, violent non-sex offences for which participants had been convicted ranged from burglary and armed robbery to murder. Their sentences ranged from 2 years to life imprisonment.

4.2.2 Materials

Research packages included a standard participant information sheet that participants were required to keep for their own information, and an informed consent sheet they were required to sign and return to the researcher prior to participating. Packages also included a basic demographic questionnaire concerning whether they confessed or denied to the police, and when this occurred, so that this variable could be monitored in relation to the other research variables.

The primary research materials consisted of two related questionnaires (which both the control and test populations received), and four vignettes with related questions (which only sex offenders received).

4.2.2.1 *Questionnaires.* Two related 35-item questionnaires were developed. The first concerned participants' perceptions of how their "own police interview" was conducted by the police for their most recent interview. The second concerned how participants believed an "ideal police interview" should be conducted by the police to solicit a confession from a guilty offender. For the test group, questions referred specifically to 'sex offenders', while for the control group, the questions referred only to 'offenders'.

The interviewing strategies under examination were, 'humanity', 'dominance', 'minimization', 'maximization', 'cognitive distortions', 'strength of evidence', and 'ethical interviewing'. Five questions were asked in each of the seven categories, and were randomly distributed through the questionnaire.

Ethical interviewing questions concerned basic principles of ethicality, including for example allowing time for the suspect to comment and being interested in seeking the truth. Humanity and dominance were based on the measures used by Holmberg and Christianson (2002). The five questions from their questionnaire with the highest loading onto the respective factors were chosen. For example, the question "My police interviewer showed a positive attitude towards me", was adapted from their variable "Interviewer expressed positive attitude to subject" (p.39). Questions concerning minimization and maximization were inspired by the training manual of Inbau, et al. (2001), and were designed to be consistent with Kassin and McNall's (1991) definitions of minimization and maximisation. Questions concerning cognitive distortions were developed from the Bumby Cognitive Distortions Scale (Bumby,

1996). Finally, questions concerning strength of evidence were influenced by the concept of perception of proof used by Gudjonsson and Sigurdsson (1999).

Participants were required to rate each item on a five-point Likert scale where 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree. The full questionnaire (specific questions used) and means and standard deviations of responses are shown in Appendix A.

4.2.2.2 Vignettes. The four vignettes provided to the test group, each included a description of a sexual offence as well as a description of a police interview with the offender (one example is shown in Appendix B). Due to the strong emphasis on sexual offending, these vignettes were deemed inappropriate for the non-sex offending control group.

The descriptions of the sexual offences were designed so that the victims' ages could be alternated between being a 12-year-old girl and a 25-year-old woman. Each included two reasons why participants may have believed the victim encouraged the offence. For example, in the example vignette, Alice said "yes" to watching television with John, and did not say anything when he started to play with her hair. Each vignette also included two clear instances where the victim states that she does not want the offender's behavior to continue. For example, Alice says "get off" to John when he tried to kiss her, and later became upset and told John to stop and that she wanted to go home. In each vignette it is clear that sex occurs. Each crime vignette was 188 words long.

Next participants were given a description of a police interview with the offender. Each interview in the experimental conditions included five techniques from the police-interviewing questionnaire in each respective category. For example, “The police officer took time to get to know John before starting the interview” in the humanity condition, “The police officer was also aggressive towards John” in the dominance condition, and “The police officer suggested that John may have believed that Alice had encouraged him to commit the offence” in the cognitive distortions condition. Each interview vignette had five of these examples that were based on the five questions in this category in the police interview questionnaires. The interview vignettes were also created to have identical word length (124 words). This was to eliminate the potential confound that a more lengthy interview scenario might be perceived as being more oppressive and so participants may rate the offender as being more likely to confess. The additional information was designed to be innocuous, for example, “The room was a pleasant temperature, neither being too hot nor too cold”. Following the presentation of the vignettes was an identical set of questions relating to the vignettes (to be discussed in more detail in the results section). Each item was measured on a 10-point Likert scale where 1 = very strongly disagree and 10 = very strongly agree.

4.2.3 Procedure

Participants were tested individually in private interviewing rooms. At the start, a clear statement was provided to the participants assuring them that the interviewers were not employees of the Department of Corrections or the Police, and that participation or non-participation would not influence their treatment whilst in the correctional center. Participants were informed that their responses were confidential

so long as they did not make any credible threats to commit further crimes, and did not disclose information about crimes for which they had not yet been convicted.

Participants undertook the tasks using written materials. Because of potential problems with literacy, participants were given the option of reading and responding to the materials themselves or having materials read to them and responding orally. Six participants decided to respond in the latter manner. Regardless of mode of participation, the instructions for each section of the questionnaire were read aloud to ensure consistency and accuracy in responding.

Order of presentation was randomized to control for order effects, therefore half of the participants received the “ideal police interview” questionnaire first, vignettes next, and the “own police interview” last, whilst for the remainder, this order was reversed. Thus, the vignettes served as a filler task between the two police interview questionnaires for the test group. With regards the vignettes for the test group, crime scenario presentation was counter-balanced and interview condition was also counterbalanced separately. Each participant received each vignette scenario and each interview condition. Age of victim was alternated for each vignette, so that for each participant, in half of the scenarios the victim was a 12-year-old girl and in half the victim was a 25-year-old woman.

4.3 RESULTS

4.3.1 Confessors' and Deniers' Perceptions of How They Were Interviewed

For sex offenders who participated and completed all sections, twenty-five confessed and twelve denied (one participant stated that he was suffering from a mental

breakdown when he was interviewed and did not know whether he confessed or denied). Confessors and deniers were compared concerning their ratings of their own experience of being interviewed by police officers with a 2 X 7 ANOVA (confessors / deniers X ethical / humanity / dominance / minimization / maximization / evidence / cognitive distortions) with repeated measures on the second factor. There was a significant difference between confessors and deniers $F(1,35)=10.41, p<.001$, between the interview techniques $F(6,210)=9.75, p<.001$, and the interaction was also significant $F(6,210)=6.01, p<.001$. These means and standard deviations are displayed in Table 4.1. The significant effects were explored using *t*-tests.

Confessors were significantly more likely to perceive their interview as being ethical (M=1.97, SD=0.82) than those who denied (M=3.14, SD=0.93), $t(35)=3.75, p<.001$. Similarly, confessors were more likely to perceive that they were treated humanely by their police interviewer (M=1.85, SD=0.85) than those who denied (M=2.80, SD=0.87), $t(35)=3.17, p<.01$, and, deniers were more likely to perceive their interview as being dominant (M=3.97, SD=1.02) than those who confessed (M=2.98, SD=0.99), $t(35)=2.81, p<.01$. Confessors were more likely to perceive that their interviewer used more evidence presentation strategies (M=2.68, SD=0.62) than those who denied (M=2.12, SD=0.84), $t(35)=2.30, p<.05$. Confessors were also more likely to perceive that their interviewer used cognitive distortion strategies (M=2.37, SD=0.45) than those who denied (M=1.97, SD=2.37), $t(35)=2.10, p<.05$. There were no significant differences between confessors and deniers concerning perceived use of minimization and maximization strategies.

Additional comparisons were made between child molesters and non-child molesters, intra and extra familial abusers, and those whose victims were boys or girls. None of these comparisons were significant and consequently are not reported here.

Table 4.1

Means and standard deviations for sex offending confessors and deniers perceptions' of police interviewing strategies during their own interview.

	Deniers		Confessors	
	N = 25		N = 12	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ethical	1.97	0.82	3.14	0.93
Humanity	1.85	0.87	2.80	0.85
Dominance	3.97	1.01	2.98	0.99
Minimization	2.12	0.81	2.35	0.58
Maximization	2.42	1.34	2.66	0.70
Strength of Evidence	2.12	0.84	2.68	0.62
Cognitive Distortions	1.97	0.71	2.37	0.45

4.3.2 Offenders' Perceptions of How They Were Interviewed and How the Police Should Interview

Sex offenders' own ratings of their experience of being interviewed by police officers and their perceptions of how an ideal police interview should be conducted were analyzed with a repeated measures 2 X 7 ANOVA (own interview / ideal interview X ethical / humanity / dominance / minimization / maximization / evidence / cognitive

distortions). These means and standard deviations are displayed in Table 4.2 There was a significant difference between participants' ratings of their own interview and how they believed suspected sex offenders should be interviewed, $F(1,37) = 61.55$, $p < .001$. Similarly, there was a significant difference between the frequency with which participants said the interview techniques were used in their own interview and how frequently they should be used, $F(1,37) = 24.11$, $p < .001$. The interaction was also significant, $F(1, 37) = 38.89$, $p < .001$. To explore these results in a more meaningful way a series of t -tests were conducted comparing participants' ratings of their own interview with how they believed an ideal interview should be conducted.

Participants rated an officer in an ideal interview as showing a more ethical approach ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 0.40$) than in their own interview ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.03$), $t(37) = 8.01$, $p < .001$. Participants rated an officer in an ideal interview as displaying more humanity ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 0.47$) than in their own interview ($M = 2.49$, $SD = 0.94$), $t(37) = 7.94$, $p < .001$, but they rated an officer in an ideal interview as displaying less dominance ($M = 1.92$, $SD = 0.44$) than in their own interview ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.07$), $t(37) = 7.86$, $p < .001$. Participants suggested an officer should use significantly more minimizations ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 0.66$) and maximizations ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.72$) in an ideal interview than the proportion of minimizations ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 0.66$) and maximizations ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.93$) that were used in their own interview, $t(37) = 2.54$, $p < .05$ and $t(37) = 2.69$, $p < .05$, respectively. Participants rated an officer in an ideal interview as using more evidence presenting strategies ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.54$) than in their own interview ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 0.74$), $t(37) = 9.15$, $p < .001$, and participants rated an officer in an ideal interview as displaying a greater number of

cognitive distortion strategies in an ideal interview ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.65$) than in their own interview ($M = 2.24$, $SD = 0.56$).

Additional comparisons were made between child molesters and non-child molesters, extra and intra-familial abusers, and those whose victims were boys and those whose victims were girls. None of these comparisons were significant and consequently are not reported here.

Table 4.2

Means and standard deviations for sex offending participants' ratings of their own interview experience, and their ratings of how the police should ideally interview in order to obtain confessions from guilty suspects.

	Own interview		Ideal interview	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ethical	2.78	1.03	4.37	0.40
Humanity	2.49	0.94	3.69	0.47
Dominance	3.29	1.07	1.92	0.44
Minimization	2.28	0.66	2.72	0.66
Maximization	2.58	0.93	3.12	0.72
Strength of Evidence	2.52	0.74	3.96	0.54
Cognitive Distortions	2.24	0.56	2.86	0.65

Violent offenders also rated their police interview and how an ideal interview should be conducted in order to secure a conviction from a guilty individual. These means

and standard deviations are displayed in Table 4.3. A 2 X 2 X 7 ANOVA (sex offender / violent offender X own interview / ideal interview X ethical / humanity / dominance / minimization / maximization / evidence / cognitive distortions) with repeated measures on the second and third factors was conducted on these data. There were no significant differences between the sex offenders and the violent offenders on their ratings of how the police interviewed them and how they felt they should interview $F(1,50) = 0.00, p > .05$. None of the interactions were significant for the different offenders either between type of offender and own and ideal interview $F(1,50)=0.24, p > .05$, between type of offender and interview technique, $F(6,300)=0.59, p > .05$ or between type of offender, own or ideal interview, and interview technique, $F(6,300)=0.58, p > .05$.

Table 4.3

Means and standard deviations for violent offending participants' ratings of their own interview experience, and their ratings of how the police should ideally interview in order to obtain confessions from guilty suspects.

	Own interview		Ideal interview	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ethical	2.90	0.94	4.26	0.44
Humanity	2.55	1.06	3.60	0.76
Dominance	3.33	0.97	2.05	0.61
Minimization	2.41	0.58	2.68	0.70
Maximization	2.93	0.82	2.83	0.79
Strength of Evidence	2.53	0.97	4.01	0.62
Cognitive Distortions	2.18	0.63	2.55	0.73

4.3.3 Sex Offenders' Perceptions of the Efficacy of the Different Strategies Used in the Vignettes

Participants were required to rate the likelihood of different suspects confessing to police officers in the different interview conditions. These means are displayed in Table 4.4. These estimates were analyzed with a one-way within-subjects ANOVA (control interview / humanity / dominance / cognitive distortions). The ANOVA showed a significant effect of interview technique $F(3,108)=14.15, p < .001$. Follow-up within-participants t -tests ($p < .05$) showed participants rated the likelihood of a confession as being significantly greater in the humanity condition than in the control, dominant, or cognitive distortion conditions. Participants rated the likelihood of a confession as being less in the dominant condition compared with the control, humanity, and cognitive distortion conditions. There was no difference between the control condition and the cognitive distortion condition in terms of rated likelihood of a confession.

As manipulation checks, a series of one-way within-subjects ANOVAs (control interview / humanity / dominance / cognitive distortions) were conducted on participants ratings of the understanding (cognitive distortions) displayed by the interviewer, dominance, and humanity. The ANOVA showed a significant effect of interview technique $F(3,99)=35.11, p < .001$. Follow-up within-participants t -tests ($p < .05$) indicated that participants felt that the offender was most understood in the humanity condition, significantly more so than in the control, cognitive distortion, and dominance conditions. Participants rated the offender as being significantly less understood in the dominance condition compared with the control, humanity and cognitive distortion condition. With regards ratings of aggression the ANOVA

showed a significant effect of interview technique $F(3,102)=66.01, p<.001$. Follow-up t-tests indicated that the dominant interview was seen as being far more aggressive than the other interviews. Finally, ratings of humanity were explored with an ANOVA which was significant $F(3,99)=34.94, p<.001$. Follow-up t-tests indicated that the humanity interview was perceived as showing far more humanity than the other interviews. The dominant interview was perceived as showing significantly less humanity, while the control and cognitive distortion interviews did not differ from one-another.

Again, additional comparisons were made between child molesters and non-child molesters, extra and intra-familial abusers, and those whose victims were boys and those whose victims were girls. None of these comparisons were significant and consequently are not reported here.

Table 4.4

Means and standard deviations (in brackets) of participants' responses to questions according to vignette condition

	Vignette Condition			
	Control	Humanity	Dominance	Cognitive Distortions
How likely would the suspect be to confess to the police by the end of the interview?	5.84 (2.22)	7.38 (1.80)	4.41 (2.55)	6.57 (1.92)
The police interviewer showed humanity towards the suspect.	5.41 (2.19)	8.12 (1.90)	2.97 (2.14)	6.18 (2.48)
The police interviewer was aggressive towards the suspect.	3.50 (2.19)	2.34 (1.73)	8.09 (2.51)	2.66 (1.43)
The police interviewer understood how the suspect was thinking about his sexual offending.	4.82 (2.49)	7.26 (2.08)	2.71 (2.13)	5.97 (2.34)

4.4 DISCUSSION

The results are consistent and clear and are discussed with regards each interview technique below. Those who confessed perceived their interview to have been more ethical than those who chose to deny. Offenders suggested that increasing the ethical standard of the interview would increase the likelihood of a guilty suspect confessing. Similarly, sex offenders who confessed perceived their interviewer to have displayed

more humanity than those who denied. Offenders suggested that humanity should be increased compared with their own police interview to increase the likelihood of a confession occurring with other offenders. When participants were tested with the vignettes they suggested that the mock-offender would be more likely to confess if his interviewer displayed higher levels of humanity. The implications of these findings are that improving ethical interviewing and displays of humanity may increase the likelihood of confessions.

Those who confessed perceived their interviewer to have displayed less dominance than those who denied. Offenders suggested that if dominance were reduced compared with their own police interview the likelihood of a confession occurring would be increased. Similarly when participants were tested with the vignettes they suggested that the mock-offender would be more likely to confess if his interviewer displayed lower levels of dominance. The implication of these findings is that dominance may reduce the likelihood of a confession.

There was no significant difference between confessors and deniers on their perceptions of whether minimization or maximization was used during their interviews. However, offenders did suggest that a confession would be more likely if more minimization and maximization strategies were used by police interviewers, suggesting this may be a potentially useful approach. Similarly, those who confessed perceived their interviewer to have displayed a greater understanding of sex offenders' cognitive distortions than those who chose to deny. Offenders suggested that increasing displays of an understanding of cognitive distortions would increase the likelihood of a guilty suspect confessing, however, regarding the vignettes, no

effect was found from the cognitive distortion condition on confession rates compared with the control condition.

Those who confessed perceived their interview to have included more evidence presenting strategies than those who chose to deny, and offenders suggested that increasing the number of evidence presenting strategies would increase the likelihood of a guilty suspect confessing. Comparisons with violent offenders indicated that both shared similar experiences of police interviewing and expressed similar views concerning how police officers can best interview to achieve confessions from the guilty. This is a finding at odds with that of Holmberg and Christianson (2002) who found that sex offenders perceived they were treated less well than violent offenders by the Swedish police.

The principal limitation of this approach is that we have to rely on offenders' perceptions of how they believed they were interviewed and how they should be interviewed. Clearly, discrepancies may exist between reality and perception of reality.

CHAPTER 5. STUDY THREE

5.1 EXPERIMENTAL MANIPULATIONS OF THE PRESENTATION OF EVIDENCE: THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCURACY AND DETAIL

To our knowledge, no one has experimentally manipulated in a laboratory setting, how different evidential factors may influence a suspect's decision to confess to a crime they have committed (though for an example of an experimental model for false confessions see Kassin & Kiechel, 1996). However, experimental methods have been used extensively in other areas of forensic psychology. For example, the majority of studies investigating eyewitness memory and jury decision-making rely on mock-witnesses and mock-jurors responses to stimuli material (e.g., Collet & Kovera, 2003; Deffenbacher, Bornstein, Penrod, & McGorty, 2004).

These studies, whilst potentially limited in ecological validity due to the artificial nature of the stimuli, and the lack of consequences of participants' actions, have nevertheless contributed greatly to our understanding of eyewitnesses and jurors. Thus, it seemed worthwhile to attempt to create a laboratory model of a suspect's decision to confess or deny, particularly shedding light on how the presentation of evidence can influence this decision. Of particular interest were accuracy of evidence and detail of evidence, and their effects on mock-suspects' decisions to confess or deny a mock-crime.

To explore these ideas, an experiment was designed that required participants to commit a mock crime. Mock-suspects then had to decide their likelihood of confessing in an interview, based on witness evidence presented to them.

We hypothesized that the more detailed the eyewitness evidence against the suspect, the more likely they would be to confess. Conversely, we hypothesized that inaccurate information would lower the likelihood of a confession. We also hypothesized that identification of the mock-suspect would be more likely to result in a confession than when the mock-suspect was not identified.

5.2 METHOD

5.2.1 Design

A 2 X 2 between-subjects design was used. The first independent variable concerned the amount of detail presented to the suspect. This was either detailed or not-detailed information. The second independent variable concerned the accuracy of the information presented to the suspect. This was either accurate or not-accurate information.

5.2.2 Participants

Participants were 40 undergraduate psychology students who participated for course credits (30 female, 10 male). The mean age was 21.50 (SD = 5.76, range 18 to 35).

5.2.3 Procedure

Participants were told they would be participating in a study concerning the responses of innocent and guilty suspects to police investigations. They were told they might be required to “steal” an object if they were assigned to the “theft” condition but if they were assigned to the “innocent” condition they would not be required to steal anything. Participants were told they would be interviewed later, and the interviewer would not know if they were in the innocent or guilty condition.

Participants were then given an envelope to open, the contents of which, informed them of whether they were in the theft or innocent condition. All participants were assigned to the theft condition. The reason for suggesting there was an innocent condition was so that participants believed they could deny the mock-crime to the interviewer without the interviewer knowing that they were lying. The instructions in the envelope were as follows.

You have been assigned to the theft condition. What you have to do is to go into the room marked experimental room. Once in the room you are to search for, and steal, a cell-phone. Once you have stolen the cell-phone leave the room and return to the waiting area where the experimenter will meet you. Try hard to act, and feel, as if you are really committing this crime.

Participants were then directed to an interviewing room that included an obvious and prominent one-way mirror. In the room was a desk with drawers. In the drawers were empty folders. There was a briefcase, and a sports bag with a towel in it. There was also a table and chairs and drawn curtains. The cell-phone was hidden behind the curtains. All participants searched through the desk drawers, the briefcase, and the sports bag. The order in which they searched the room varied but they always did this before finding the cell-phone.

Participants were interviewed three days later. The interviewer was told that half the people that would be interviewed were innocent and half were guilty. Thus, the interviewer did not know that all the mock-suspects were in the “theft” condition. At the start of the structured-interview the interviewer stated the following,

The reason you are here today concerns an allegation of the theft of a cell-phone. I have evidence that suggests you stole this phone. A witness has made the following statement.

At this point the interviewer read a witness statement that commenced as follows,

On the 3rd of August (date), at approximately 11.00 am (time) I was waiting in an interviewing room at the Psychology Clinic. I was there as part of an experiment I had signed up for to receive participation credits for my course in Criminology. The interview room was fitted with a one-way mirror and while I was in the waiting room I saw another woman go into the next room through the one-way mirror. I watched her enter the room, I watched her because she was acting suspiciously.

Correct dates, times, and gender were used. Criminology and Psychology students were both required to participate in experiments for credits but normally participated in different experiments, consequently it was entirely plausible to the Psychology participants that a Criminology student was behind the one-way mirror. The remainder of the witness statement was constructed to come from one of four conditions, detailed correct, detailed incorrect, not-detailed correct, and not-detailed incorrect. The statements were constructed as follows.

Detailed accurate information statement. For this statement all the information was correct. The witness statements varied in the way that the offender was described

to have searched the room, to be consistent with what the participant did. The following is an example,

She opened a sports bag that was already in the room and looked inside. She then rummaged around the bag, lifting out a towel and looking inside all the pockets. She then opened a briefcase that had also already been in the room, and looked through the briefcase thoroughly, including all the compartments. Next she opened the drawers of the desk, and opened a folder in the bottom drawer and looked through it. She then searched through the bag and briefcase again, before going over to the curtains and taking a cell-phone from behind them. Then she left the room. I would describe the woman as a white woman aged about 21-23 (age). She was about 5'5" to 5'7" tall (height). Her hair was brown (hair colour) of short to medium length (hair length) and styled in a high pony tail (hair style). She was wearing a white singlet top (colour and style of top). She was wearing brown slacks (colour and style of bottom clothing). She was wearing beige, slip-on, closed toe, shoes (colour and style of shoes) Her complexion was fair (complexion). She was wearing a silver-banded watch with an analogue face (accessory).

Detailed inaccurate information statement. For this statement information was identical to the detailed correct information except the witness states that the cell-phone was taken from the desk drawer, and the descriptive information in brackets above was altered to be inaccurate. Thus, for half the participants their height was increased by 3 inches, for the other half it was reduced by 3 inches. Hair length, colour, and style were changed, for example long brown hair in a pony tail might be described as short blond hair that was spiked up. A white singlet might be

described as a blue T-shirt, brown slacks as blue jeans, beige, slip-on, closed toe, shoes might be described as black sneakers and fair complexion might be changed to slightly tanned complexion. The accessory might be changed for example from a silver banded watch with an analogue face to a gold bracelet.

Not-detailed accurate information statement. In this condition all the information was correct but not detailed, for example,

She was a white woman aged about 21-23 (age). She was about 5'5" to 5'7" tall (height) and had brown hair (hair colour). She found a cell-phone behind the curtain and took it.

Not- detailed inaccurate information statement. In this condition the statement was identical to the not-detailed correct information except the witness states that the cell-phone was taken from the desk drawer, and the descriptive information in brackets above was altered to be inaccurate as described previously.

Next all participants were given the following instructions by the interviewer.

Now what I would like you to do is to decide what your likelihood of confessing to this crime would be on a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being very unlikely to confess and 10 being very likely to confess. Please respond on the form but do not let me see your response.

Participants did not tell the interviewer their rating to prevent commitment bias for the next task. Once the participant had circled their response on the Likert scale provided, the interviewer read the following instructions,

Now I would like to give you \$10 so that you have an extra \$10. Before you can have this money I would like you to decide whether you will confess or deny this crime. If you deny the crime then the evidence against you and your denial will be put forward to a group of mock-jurors. If they find you “guilty” you will be fined \$10 so you will receive no money. If they find you “not guilty” you will not be fined and will receive the \$10 at the end of this semester. If you confess, you will be found guilty, but because you admitted your crime, you will only be fined \$5. You will receive the remaining \$5 dollars at the end of the semester. All money will be distributed at the end of the semester and you will be notified by email where to collect the money.

The rationale for giving participants \$10, which they could then potentially lose, was that people are more risk averse concerning losing something than to gaining something (Larrick, 1993). The financial incentives were designed to approximate the relative consequences of denying and being convicted, denying and not being convicted, and confessing and being convicted in the actual criminal justice system.

The interviewer then asked the participant if he or she understood the instructions. If the participant indicated that he or she did not understand the instructions, the interviewer re-read the instructions slowly, and offered further clarification when required.

Participants were then asked “Do you confess or deny this offence?” and their answer was recorded. They were then advised to complete the remainder of the questionnaire. All items in the questionnaire required the participants to respond on 10-point Likert scales. The first group of questions addressed participants’ perceptions of the experiment, the evidence against them, and their experiences when participating in the experiment. The analysed questions were “How strong do you think the evidence against you is?” “How accurate do you think the evidence against you is?”, “How detailed (regardless of accuracy) do you think the evidence against you is?”, “How guilty do you feel?”, and “How pressured did you feel to confess?” The remaining group of questions pertained to the mock police interviewer’s performance, and required the participants to rate their agreement with the following statements “The interviewer was fair”, “The interviewer was aggressive towards me”, and “The police interviewer showed humanity towards me”.

5.3 RESULTS

5.3.1 Manipulation Checks

As a manipulation check 2 X 2 between-subjects ANOVAs (detailed/not-detailed X accurate/inaccurate) were conducted on mock-suspects’ ratings of the detail and accuracy of the evidence against them. The means and standard deviations are displayed in Table 5.1. Participants indicated that they felt the evidence to be more detailed in the detailed condition ($M = 7.15$, $SD = 2.21$) than in the non-detailed condition ($M = 5.75$, $SD = 1.97$), $F(1, 36) = 5.99$, $p < .05$. Participants also indicated that they felt the evidence was more detailed in the accurate condition ($M = 7.30$, $SD = 2.00$) than in the inaccurate condition ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 2.06$), $F(1, 36) = 8.83$, $p < .01$. The interaction was also significant, $F(1, 36) = 5.99$, $p < .05$. Follow-up t -tests (p

< .05) indicated that the interaction was due to participants in the detailed and accurate condition rating the evidence against them as more detailed ($M = 8.70$, $SD = 1.06$) than those in the detailed inaccurate condition ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 1.96$), the not-detailed accurate condition ($M = 5.90$, $SD = 1.73$) and the not-detailed inaccurate condition ($M = 5.60$, $SD = 2.27$) which did not differ from one-another significantly.

With regards participants' ratings of the accuracy of the evidence, a significant main effect was found between the two accuracy conditions, $F(1, 36) = 55.25$, $p < .001$. Participants indicated that they believed the evidence to be more accurate in the accurate condition ($M = 7.45$, $SD = 2.05$) than in the inaccurate condition ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.55$). No main effect was found for detail, $F(1, 36) = 0.07$, $p > .05$ and the interaction was also not significant, $F(1, 36) = 0.36$, $p > .05$. Thus, the manipulation of the independent variables was effective.

A series of 2 X 2 between-subjects ANOVAs (detailed/not detailed X accurate/not accurate) were conducted on mock-suspects' ratings of the interviewer for aggression, humanity, and fairness. No interviewer main effects or interactions were significant, as would be expected with the double-blind nature of the design. For brevity we do not report these results in full here.

Table 5.1

Mock-suspects ratings' of likelihood of confessing, strength of evidence, guilt and pressure in relation to detail and accuracy.

Question	Detailed		Not-detailed	
	Accurate	Inaccurate	Accurate	Inaccurate
How likely would you be to confess?	6.50 (2.95)	2.40 (1.90)	6.10 (2.23)	3.70 (1.70)
How strong do you think the evidence against you is?	7.20 (2.86)	2.20 (1.14)	6.60 (2.91)	3.60 (1.71)
How accurate do you think the evidence against you is?	7.70 (2.06)	3.00 (1.49)	7.20 (2.10)	3.20 (1.69)
How detailed (regardless of accuracy) do you think the evidence against you is?	8.70 (1.06)	5.60 (1.96)	5.90 (1.73)	5.60 (2.27)
How guilty do you feel?	7.20 (1.99)	4.50 (1.27)	6.60 (3.34)	5.10 (2.23)
How pressured did you feel to confess?	5.40 (2.59)	3.20 (1.99)	4.60 (1.96)	4.10 (1.67)

Note. Scores range from 1 (not at all) to 10 (extremely). Standard deviations are in brackets.

5.3.2 The Influence of Detail and Accuracy on Mock-Suspects' Decisions to Confess

To determine if the information included in the interview influenced mock-suspects' decisions to confess a 2 X 2 between-subjects ANOVA (detailed/not detailed X accurate/not accurate) was conducted on mock-suspects' ratings of their likelihood of

confessing. The means and standard deviations are displayed in Table 5.1. No significant main effect was found for detail $F(1, 36) = 0.40, p > .05$. A significant main effect was found for accuracy, $F(1, 36) = 20.90, p < .001$. Participants gave a significantly higher likelihood of confessing in the accurate condition ($M = 6.30, SD = 2.56$) than in the inaccurate condition ($M = 3.05, SD = 1.88$). The interaction was not significant, $F(1, 36) = 1.43, p > .05$.

These results were mirrored by participants' actual decisions to confess. A logit model was run on participants' decision to confess or deny as the dependant variable and detail and accuracy as independent variables. This is analogous to the previous ANOVAs except with binary data. There was no significant effect of detail, $z = -1.44, p > .05$. There was a significant effect of accuracy, $z = -2.64, p < .01$. Fifteen participants confessed in the accurate condition compared with 3 in the inaccurate condition. There was no significant interaction, $z = 1.45, p > .05$. Participants' ratings of their likelihood of confessing and their actual decisions to confess were highly correlated, $r(40) = .75, p < .001$.

5.3.3 The Relationship between Detail and Accuracy, and Perceived Strength of Evidence, Guilt and Pressure to Confess.

A series of 2 X 2 ANOVAs (detailed/not detailed X accurate/not accurate) were conducted on participants' ratings of strength of evidence, feelings of guilt, and perceptions of pressure to confess, the means and standard deviations are again displayed in Table 5.1. For participants' perceptions of the strength of evidence no significant main effect was found for detail $F(1, 36) = 0.31, p > .05$, but a significant main effect was found for accuracy, $F(1, 36) = 30.64, p < .001$. Participants

perceived the evidence to be stronger in the accurate condition ($M = 6.90$, $SD = 2.83$) compared with the inaccurate condition ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.59$). The interaction was not significant, $F(1, 36) = 1.92$, $p > .05$.

The same pattern was found for participants' ratings of guilt and for perceived pressure to confess. No significant main effect on participants' perceptions of guilt was found for detail, $F(1, 36) = 0.00$, $p > .05$, but a significant main effect was found for accuracy, $F(1, 36) = 4.23$, $p < .05$. Participants stated that they felt more guilt in the accurate condition ($M = 6.90$, $SD = 2.69$) compared with the inaccurate condition ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.79$). The interaction was not significant, $F(1, 36) = 0.67$, $p > .05$. Similarly, no significant main effect was found for detail on perceived pressure to confess, $F(1, 36) = 0.01$, $p > .05$, but a significant main effect was found for accuracy, $F(1, 36) = 8.13$, $p < .001$. Participants stated that they felt more pressure to confess in the accurate condition ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 2.27$) than in the inaccurate condition ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.84$). The interaction was not significant, $F(1, 36) = 0.67$, $p > .05$.

5.4 DISCUSSION

The hypothesis that inaccurate information would lower the likelihood of a confession was strongly supported. Participants in the inaccurate conditions believed the evidence against them was far weaker than participants in the accurate conditions. Participants in the accurate condition were more likely to confess than participants in the inaccurate condition. An explanation for why inaccurate evidence reduced their likelihood of confessing is that the mock-suspects may have believed that a jury would not convict them if evidence was erroneous, clearly ignoring the fact that a jury will often have no objective way of telling if evidence is accurate or inaccurate.

Importantly, in this experiment virtually all the inaccurate evidence (e.g., clothing, hair color and style, whether they went through the briefcase before the sports bag) would not be possible to objectively discredit (see also, Kassin, 2005).

We also hypothesized that the more detailed the eyewitness evidence against the suspect, the more likely they would be to confess. This was not the case in this experiment. Whilst participants believed the evidence against them was more detailed in the detailed condition than the not detailed condition (suggesting a successful manipulation of the variable), this did not increase their perception of the strength of the evidence against them, or their likelihood of confessing. One explanation is that the combination of an identification by an eyewitness, and details concerning the mock-crime they had committed produced something of a ceiling effect. However, this does not seem to be reflected in the ratings for likelihood of confessing. Perhaps much more detail or corroborating evidence is also required to increase confession rates still further.

CHAPTER 6. STUDY FOUR

6.1 POLICE OFFICERS' PERCEPTIONS OF INTERVIEWING SUSPECTED SEX OFFENDERS: A QUALITATIVE APPROACH

To contribute to our understanding of interviewing suspected sex offenders, a qualitative study was developed to determine police perspectives of suspect interviewing, and to determine the ways in which they conduct these interviews. A qualitative approach utilizing semi-structured interviews with police officers was deemed appropriate, as this would ensure that a variety of variables, which may not have been identified by previous research, could be identified here. Police officers were deemed particularly valuable participants as they typically have a great deal of experience in the field of interviewing suspected offenders, as well as in investigating alleged or suspected offences.

Generally, the aim of each interview was to determine police officers' views and opinions of offenders, particularly sex offenders, their feelings about working in the area, how they tend to interview offenders and how these approaches relate to the ways they believe offenders should be interviewed, and finally, but perhaps most importantly, what factors they believe are most closely linked to a suspect's decision to confess or deny. The results of this study are examined to determine how closely police officers' opinions and techniques align with the available literature regarding interviewing suspected offenders and increasing rates of confessions.

In this study, 13 police officers of the Queensland Police Service were interviewed about their perspectives of and approaches to interviewing suspected offenders. The

interviews were semi-structured. More details regarding specific questions asked are outlined in the method section below.

6.2 METHOD

6.2.1 Participants

The participants were 10 male and 3 female police officers of the Queensland Police Service (QPS). Each participant had experience with interviewing suspected offenders, including sex offenders. All participants worked around child abuse and/or sexual assault investigation, for example, working either with adult sexual assault, extra familial child matters, intra familial child matters, or Internet related offences such as child pornography. The mean length of time that participants had served with the QPS was 16.64 years with a range of 7 to 25 years.

Two participants reported receiving no internal training regarding interviewing adults. The remaining 11 participants reported attending a variety of internal training programs, the most common of which was detective training, which was listed by seven participants. Eight participants reported starting or completing tertiary level studies, one participant reported attending TAFE, while the remaining two participants had attended secondary school only. Finally, 10 participants reported some form of employment prior to joining the police, while the remaining participant joined the police directly from university. The mean duration of the interviews was 40.64 minutes, ranging from approximately 20 minutes to two hours.

6.2.2 Procedure

Following the completion and provision of an external research application to the QPS, a brief presentation was delivered and notices were sent out to all relevant police officers advising them of the research project being conducted, including the purposes and processes of the project. Interested officers were advised to contact the principle researcher to arrange a meeting time. Interviews were conducted at times and locations suitable to each participant.

Interviews were conducted either individually or in pairs (when permission was provided) in a private room. Participants were informed of their right to anonymity and confidentiality prior to beginning the interview. When consent was provided, the interviews were recorded. Upon completion of the interviews, each participant was required to fill out a simple demographic information sheet. Demographic information collected included, gender, unit, year they joined the police force, highest external educational qualification, all internal courses they had attended relating to interviewing adults, and finally, other jobs and non-policing qualifications they had held prior to joining the police force. The rank of each officer was not recorded, due to concerns of the QPS regarding confidentiality and anonymity. Transcripts were prepared for each interview where a recoding had been attained, and these formed the basis for examination and analysis of the data.

The specific questions asked during each interview were “How did you come to be working in this area?” “Could you start by sharing your views about how suspected offenders should and are being interviewed?”, “How would you describe a typical suspected sex offender?”, “Does interviewing suspected sex offenders differ from

interviewing suspected non-sex offenders?”, and “Tell me about the aspects related to the interview that impact on whether a suspected sex-offender confesses or denies”. Each question was designed to be sufficiently broad so that each participant could have freedom to answer the question in his or her own way, and to give each participant the option of providing varied information. Where appropriate, further clarification and elaboration was sought from participants by asking alternative or additional questions.

It was hoped that the participants’ answers to these questions would provide us with an understanding of police officers’ views and opinions of offenders, particularly sex offenders, how they feel about working in the area, how they tend to interview offenders, where they learn these interviewing techniques, how their individual approach compares to the ways they believe offenders should be interviewed, and in particular, what factors they believe are most closely linked to a suspect’s decision to confess or deny.

6.3 RESULTS

6.3.1 How police officers came to be working in the area.

Often police officers mentioned that they had gained their position within the sexual abuse investigation sections of the police through promotion, or via applying for a change of scenery. They often mentioned that what had attracted them to working in the area were the challenge, variety, and job security, and the fact that they were interested in the area. For example, “it was a challenge and job security... and it is also interesting because you never know what you are going to encounter from one moment to the next... in terms of criminal investigation I just find it I always found it

more challenging than most other aspects of policing, it is something where you just have to sit down and you have to look at the nitty gritty of things and follow the path and find your offender” and “job security...the challenge...varying roles and responsibilities”. Some participants mentioned that they had not initially wanted to be working in the area of child abuse and sexual offences, but after being placed there, developed an interest in the area and positive views of their job.

6.3.2 Police interviewers' perceptions of how suspected offenders should, and are being interviewed.

There tended to be consensus regarding the belief that all offenders are different, and that therefore, all interviews are different, including the approach taken by the police interviewer. Police officers tended to suggest that depending on the personality, offending history, alleged crime being investigated and so forth, the interviewing style was likely to vary across suspected offenders. However, it was also extremely common for police officers to point out the importance of rapport building and empathy for all types of offenders.

Examples of police answers to this question include: “well I think every offender is different, um, some of them are really hard nosed and whatever you say and do with them you are never gonna have any cooperation from them... from my point of view I always try to look at the background of the person and assess what sort of personality they are and adopt a relevant interview technique from there... sometimes...you know you've got to build a rapport up with them and um try to just try and satisfy their ego and get them talking that way, but sometimes you are never going to have a hope”, “I think... you determine how an investigation or an interview is going to go from the

point of first contact and it's probably...how you approach the suspect in the first instance and...it might sound corny but if you treat the suspect as you would want to be treated I think that in many cases you would get cooperation to a certain level, but that is not always going to be the case... a sensible part of any investigators role is to look at a person's criminal history before you even approach them and if you've got the luxury of time you would check all of the person's background and the holding on police indices to see what sort of suspect you are dealing with in the first instance", "It varies depending on the offender...it depends on the offence", "I think that...your approach to those sorts of offenders is very dependent upon...their relationship with the complainant you know if it's a familial thing like a family or friend of the family or whatever depending on whatever the relationship is... obviously the whole rapport building thing which we all embrace... a lot of that is pretty important, when you come to interviewing your offenders there is that element of normalization, I think you need to in some respects keep it as normal as possible and not to approach the situation and the interview um and label it...as a sex offender", "It's an individual thing, it's a personality it's the same thing as if you were going for a job interview or even with just somebody a new person that you meet, you feed off what you get from them as far as how you should approach a certain topic or what topic you can approach, within limited conversation you can gauge just from a short period of conversation what that person is like and how the best way is to approach an interview with them", and finally, "everyone has their own way of doing things...there is no specific training".

Similarly, one officer pointed out the following "I try and treat all offenders the same...I suppose in my experience if you show any personal feelings towards them as

far as the offence they have committed or that sort of thing...that can tip them the other way where they don't like you and wont talk to you ...I sort of don't let my personal feelings or if you have a particular feeling or disgust for whatever they have done is not to demonstrate that to them and if they are inclined to speak to you then...I believe they will be more likely to do that if they are treated well than if they are treated you know badly and you know like they are less than normal or less than human". This view point tended to be common amongst most participants. Another officer stated "some people need to be shocked a little bit and some people need to have the rapport built up, but what I mean by shocking is some people need to be dragged out of bed at six o'clock in the morning or woken up... get them on the back foot before they realise and you know, before they come to their senses...I know that may not seem like a fair thing to say but we are not trying to be fair here, we are trying to solve a crime".

Officers also tended to point out that legislative and policy guidelines impacted strongly on how offenders are being interviewed, as well as on the outcomes of the interviews. For example, "not only do they have the right to silence but we have got to make sure that they understand that they have got the right to remain silent and then if they indicate that they don't understand then we have actually got to explain it to them to the point where they do indicate that they understand and so it is really drummed into them from the outset", and "from a technical point of view you have to look at what offence you believe the person has committed um that has various legal points that you have to be able to prove...in court um so you have to make sure your questioning is framed in a way that you cover each of those points to prove each of those things in court so that that's the technical part of doing each interview...it then

just comes down to an individual style as to how you actually speak to the person”, and finally, “doing an interview is rather or would be rather intimidating for anybody in a room with no windows and a table where a seating layout is already pre organised and recording equipment are in front of you... and everything in the preamble that we have to do straight away, it makes it very intimidating for somebody and I think that is where it is very important when you first approach the person to try and put them at ease somewhat, and um explain the process to them so that you can try and cut down on the intimidation level”.

Officers commonly argued that most suspected offenders exercised their right to silence and to seek legal advice, which minimised the number of suspect interviews that police officers conducted. There tended to be agreement that many (perhaps most) suspected offenders, particularly sex offenders, declined to be interviewed in the first instance, at times to their own detriment. For example, “...a lot is affected by um legal advice you probably find the majority of people we particularly in this area that we want to interview as suspects decline to be interviewed, and often that is on legal advice so we you know approach them wanting to interview them, they have a legal right to seek legal advice not to speak to us if they don’t want to, and a lot of them take that option so we therefore don’t have the opportunity to interview them”.

Officers also appeared to be aware of the risks associated with taking an aggressive or intimidating approach with a suspect, including for example, having the interview thrown out as evidence in a court case. For example “well we had to stand up in an interview one day and that was deemed to be oppressive...you know I have heard of interviews being thrown out because the police officer stood up, you know, and he

said he was having a stretch but it was deemed to be intimidating...that is how unnatural the setting is...that is ridiculous that you can't get up and walk around...if your image was off tape I could understand that, it may have been an issue off video tape, but um otherwise...that is unnatural". In this sense it may be possible that police interviewers are particularly cautious about the way they conduct an interview, and the way they interact with a suspect, because of the risks it could pose in later stages of the criminal justice system. Overall, it appeared that the most common opinion amongst the participants was that a humane approach is typically preferable to a dominant or aggressive approach, due particularly to the legislative risks addressed above, and to a slightly lesser extent the fact that suspects may be more likely to disclose to a humane interviewer than a dominant one.

Finally, another common response of the participants was that there was no official training for interviewing suspected sex offenders, and that as such interviewing skills are learned through both trial and error and observational learning. Officers also commonly pointed out the fact that interviewing is a team effort. For example "It's just through learnt behaviour", "Trial and error", "you work with other people throughout your career and you pick different things up", "There is no specific training in interviewing sex offenders...interviewing of offenders generally is something that you learn as you go along, um you get some very basic techniques um all the dos and don'ts of interviews given to you when you are in the police academy but pretty much after that you learn from experience and by observing other people you work with...so in the early stages you watch how other people do interviews then you have a go yourself, um most of our interviews are done with two officers and the offender or the suspect um so therefore you have like a backup I suppose in that if you

forget to cover something the other person is sitting there listening and they have their thoughts and they can chip in as well”, “there is no training or anything specific in how to go about it, it is a learned skill that you pick up over the years and learn from experiences of making mistakes and finding out in court that you made a mistake so you don’t do it again, or from watching other people and thinking that the way they did that was good I might adopt doing it that way”. A proportion of participants expressed a very positive attitude regarding the possibility of developing or undergoing training programs in future.

6.3.3 How police interviewers describe a typical suspected sex offender.

The most common response from police interviewers was that there is no such thing as a typical sex offender. For example, “They all come from different backgrounds.

We came across a myriad of personalities, you get your ones with psychopathic type tendencies ah and then you get the one who appears to be the average Joe on the street... I don’t think you can pigeon hole a typical sex offender”, “they are all different and they have a whole spectrum of employment ranks and socioeconomic groups, everyone tries to stereotype a typical sex offender but it is just impossible to do that”, “There is none...it could be dad on his child, it can be somebody who gets drunk and attacks some lady or some bloke...there is no specific offender”, “it’s the same thing with the interviewing, each of them will approach a situation in a different way and they may have different thought patterns. They might have a similar interest, but it is just like anybody else joining the local darts club, they are not the same exact type of person so you can’t necessarily pick one from another, you know they might have similar interests...they may do similar things, but you can’t categorise them in one group”, and finally, “in all the years I’ve worked in this area they have come from

all walks of life...you sometimes you build up this picture of what someone looks like in your mind while you are investigating it, but when you finally meet them they are completely different”.

Alternatively, some officers suggested that there might have been subtypes of offenders. For example “I think you can look at certain types of sexual offences and then start looking for a certain type of offender, though I mean obviously if you are looking for signature type offences you are looking at somebody with a certain type of bent... some could just be opportunistic type offences and its obvious from the MO and that is what you have gleaned from the crime scene and the complainant and you know you may just be looking for a different kind of offender, it all just depends on the crime that you are faced with really”.

Importantly, no officer argued that there was a typical sex offender, and no officer argued that this stereotype could be used to devise a particular interviewing strategy.

6.3.4 Police interviewers' perceptions of whether interviewing suspected sex offenders differ from interviewing suspected non-sex offenders.

Typically, police officers referred back to the point that all interviews are different because all offenders are different. In this sense, police officers generally stated that interviewing suspected sex offenders does not differ in many ways from interviewing other types of offenders from a technical standpoint. For example, “Well there is nothing really different in the technique, it’s the type of questions which are going to be asked, obviously because no one interview is the same as the next, because again it

goes back to your crime scene the complaint the type of suspect you are dealing with...” “The legality of interviewing a suspect for an offence is that we have specific things we have to prove in court...each charge has a break down of elements that we have to prove and we do that by collecting witness statements, you know examining crime scenes, whatever, but we also if we interview an offender can prove it by asking them the appropriate questions to prove those things finding out what their attention was what they did at certain times all that sort of thing shows their mind at the time, and they detail their actions which shows um intent and all that type of thing, so it is a combination, but for every offence whether it be a burglary that you are investigating or a sexual offence you still have to go through all of those same steps”, “everyone is different... it all depends on the person’s personality for how you are going to interview him, and it is very hard to say, other than that you will just have to play it off them and see what they are going to do and whether they are going to talk to you and on what line and how bad they are and whether getting down to their level is going to make them supply you with more information or whether a stern approach might also get them to supply you with more information. So it is very hard, there is no specific way or specific type of person who we can say is a sex offender, where one thing would work and one thing wouldn’t work...” and finally, “I don’t think it is too much difference in your technique so to speak from interviewing sexual offenders and other types of offenders, I guess...again it does come down to a personality thing”.

One important point that was generally agreed upon, however, was the fact that there is considerable stigma associated with sex offences and being a sex offender, which can impact on the interaction within the interview as well as the outcome of the

interview. Stigma was element that was identified as making interviewing sex offenders different from interviewing other offenders. For example, “that stigma is the reason why it is very hard to get any truth out of them...unless they are confronted with all the facts”. Other factors that made interviewing these types of offenders different were the difference in the amount of evidence available in these cases, shame, and the offender’s familiarity with the investigative process. For example, “well for a start you usually have a problem the only thing you are going to have most of the time is one word versus another, you might be lucky enough to have some sort of DNA evidence but then it also comes down to consensual issues...the average sex offender, if he hasn’t been worded up, could try to justify what he has done by saying it was consensual...” and “...it depends if they have been through the system before too, cause once they have been through the system they know not to answer any questions, because half the time they are talking themselves into being charged”.

Typically, participants expressed the opinion that sex offenders, particularly compared to other types of offenders, had the most to lose from confessing and being caught, especially due to social stigma attached to this type of offending. In this sense, participants often believed that it was harder for sex offenders to confess, which made the interviewing at times more difficult. In light of this, participants often emphasised the importance of using rapport building and calmness, and a variety of other techniques to get the offender onside for long enough to get as much information as possible.

6.3.5 Police interviewers' perceptions of the aspects related to the interview that impact on whether a suspected sex offender confesses or denies.

Often, participants argued that it was factors related to the individual, such as personality, that impacted on the suspect's decision to confess or deny. Other factors that were identified however included relationship to the victim and fear of consequences. For example, "I think that is probably an individual thing I mean from the suspect's point of view um they're um current situation um if they are married if they have children in the house or a position of responsibility within the community or whatever, but it is individual for the suspect and might be a factor beyond our control", "Some are who are acknowledging their own guilt particularly when it involves their own children...they don't want to put their children through the court process so therefore are prepared to admit their guilt, plead guilty, and not subject their child to having to go through the court process, so that sometimes is the big factor but at the same time you sometimes see that they don't care that it doesn't worry them that that is going to happen, because often when these things come out they are kicked out of the house they are ostracised from their family and become bitter in that respect... worry of penalty I think is probably going to tip them the other way that you know if I admit or plead guilty I am definitely going to go to jail but if I fight it I might not so lets run the gauntlet and see what happens".

Other factors that were considered particularly important by the participants were evidence, and the interviewer's approach. For example, "you do sort of lay your cards on the table to a degree just to be sure that they realise where you're coming from and that you do have a strong case or something like that, it may be a case that you have to show your cards but yeah sometimes that is just what you have to do to get as much

information as you can to get a confession of some sort”, “my personal way of interviewing is let them tell the whole story exactly what they want right through the whole thing, and then if you’ve got some evidence to put to them, put it to them at the end and see what they’ve got to say”, “you could say, give them a broad overview of what the allegations are against them and ask them to tell you in their own words, give them a big chunk of time, free narrative, where they can tell you what they like as much as they can so that you can sort of hone in on parts of what they have said to you so that you can try and clarify certain points and whatever, and you know even if that means coming back to the complainants original statement and specific allegations and specific things parts of the conversation and ask them to respond, and quite often their body language shows up different things of specific allegations that if you put them to them, even if they don’t admit to them, it gives you an idea of if you are on the right track and how accurate your information is”, “it will depend on their personality but it also depends on the interviewer, like for me to come across I could never come across as an aggressive person in an interview because I’m not like that by nature, um that would just not work for me, people you know this big burley six foot with a rough strong personality sitting there and I couldn’t do that anyway even if I thought it would be a successful technique for an interview, so in that case you know it might mean that I get somebody else of similar size and similar kind of personality who that person might respond to better than me doing the interview”, “sometimes it is a bit of a cat and mouse thing where they are not sure and at times they will be denying something until with questioning it becomes obvious to him that the weight of the evidence is fairly big and then it becomes too much and they will confess, so evidence definitely has a bearing on it, um sometimes at the interviewing stage definitely at the court stage, because even the ones who decline to be interviewed

when it gets to court that is when they and the solicitors have seen the full evidence and they likely can see well we have no we probably are not going to win this if we fight the charge, and they are better off to make a plea of guilty and get a sentence discount... it definitely makes a difference it can tip over a person who is initially denying to suddenly start confessing but at court I suppose that is the time when they can look for holes in your evidence and make a decision about whether they are going to fight it or not”, “I personally believe that the way they are treated is a big thing too and um towards showing them a bit of compassion um sometimes for them it is a weight off their chest to be able to talk to someone, so you need to be able to listen to them and not just treat them badly and abuse them, because the last thing they are going to want to do is talk to you then so um I yeah, so I have often found myself that by treating them that way that the ones that are likely to confess often are much more open and free with what they tell you...I view it that I gain nothing by treating them any differently from anyone else um if I treat them well I might get an admission which assists my case and the complainant so um that is all I can do”.

Finally, and importantly, participants also often pointed out that obtaining a confession was not the only reason for conducting an interview, and that other factors could be utilised during prosecution in lieu of a confession from the suspect. For example, some participants argued that catching a suspect out on a lie could be equally as effective as obtaining a confession, and that other evidence is also used when a confession is not obtained. In this sense, it appears that while the police do appreciate the great importance of gaining a confession, and do attempt to gain a confession wherever possible, they are still committed to other investigative techniques that will ensure adequate evidence or proof, which can be used to ensure a

guilty verdict in court. For example, “sometimes silence is better than sitting down and uh taking a version off somebody in a police recorded interview, because the reality is that uh if the complainant is strong and the evidence is strong the suspect will then have to get into the witness box...and explain their version of the events to a jury, and then they are subject to cross examination by a prosecutor, whereas police can’t cross examine we can only clarify points”, “the second you realise that they are not going to tell you the truth you become sort of focussed on getting them to tell you, sort of paint you the biggest picture of what they have been doing and how they do know these people, just so you can try and pick the floors in the story after you hear it, because that could become important to you, you know you want to extrapolate as much information as they will give you because they are going to participate in an interview”, “a confession is not the be all and end all of our job, um it is great to have them but we have always got to rely a lot on other evidence as well, um purely for the sake that sometimes though legal complications legal argument um if there is a mistake make by the police during questioning or something that can jeopardise whether the interview with the offender is admissible...so if we haven’t proved everything through our victim statement and witnesses and forensic evidence if we are doing DNA testing or anything like that than we have lost that case...”.

Other factors which participants believe impact on confessions and denials, which were listed to a lesser extent, included guilt (though participants believed this varied across offenders with some having no guilt, and others having a great deal of guilt), legal advice from solicitors, time passed since the offence, the seriousness of the offence, the location of the interview (example, home, scene or police station), the interviewer’s approach and rapport with the suspect, expected outcome of confessing

or denying (example, fear of consequences, thinking they could get away with it and so forth), fear of the response from their family, friends, and colleagues, media coverage, education level, knowledge or experience of the justice system, and finally, the extent to which they value honesty. Only one participant identified the impact of cognitive distortions, or discussed how an understanding of these distortions could be used in dealings with the offender.

In relation to factors associated with confessions and denials, participants often argued that an approach using slow escalation could be useful for many offenders. For example, most participants agreed that an interview should be calm and respectful early on, particularly to allow rapport building with the suspect, and to allow the suspect to gain trust and comfort with the interviewer. Next, participants typically recommended time for a free narrative response from the offender, which was aimed at gaining as much information as possible from the offender. Typically, the next step involved either asking for more specific information, or else presenting evidence which conflicted with what the offender has said previously, and then allowing the suspect a chance to either change their answer, or further explain their initial answer.

Some participants argued that if the suspect continued to deny, it was feasible to slightly increase the seriousness of the interviewing approach, such as by becoming more confrontational about inconsistencies in their story, more “official” in their demeanour, or else using long silences to encourage the offender to provide additional information. Importantly though, participants were very careful to suggest that any escalation should be reserved for as long as possible to avoid getting the offender off side early in the interview. It was also commonly argued that escalation should be

used with caution, so that the suspect could not interpret any police behaviour as an inducement or threat at a later stage, as this could interfere significantly with prosecution later in the case.

6.4 DISCUSSION

6.4.1 Limitations of the Present Study and Suggestions for Future Work.

Clearly, the most obvious limitation of the present study is the restricted research sample. Greater numbers of participants are certainly required in order for any meaningful analysis to be conducted in future. In this study, it was difficult to increase the sample size because of ethical restrictions associated with University-based research, such as that participation was entirely voluntary. If future work regarding police interviewing is to be successful, an approach where officers are obliged to participate as part of their routine ongoing management is likely to be more effective. Future research should also seek to obtain quantitative data so that statistical analysis is possible.

6.4.2 Conclusions.

Despite the aforementioned limitations of this study, it is possible to make some brief and tentative conclusions from the data. For example, it appears that officers typically believe that there is no typical sex offender, and therefore, no typical approach to interviewing these types of offenders. They also generally appear to understand the considerable stigma associated with these offences. It was common for the participants to identify the importance of establishing rapport and putting the suspect at ease at the outset of interview. A humane approach to interviewing was more likely to be recommended than a dominant approach.

Legislative and policy restrictions, such as informing the suspect of their legal rights, legal advice from solicitors, and the formal setting of the interview, were all listed as factors which impact on the likelihood of an interview with the suspect being conducted, as well as the likelihood of a suspect confessing or denying during that interview. Evidence was also often identified as a very important factor in the suspect's decision to confess or deny, and participants often expressed the need to be careful in the way that evidence was presented to the suspect. Other factors such as parental status, proximity to the victim and relationship with the victim, guilt, shame, personality, socioeconomic status, education, and offending history, were also identified.

An important implication of this study is the finding that in general, police officers views and opinions of suspected offenders, as well as their approaches to interviewing offenders, are aligned relatively closely with the literature in this area. This is particularly the case regarding their general acknowledgement of the importance of

empathy and rapport building, and their use of evidence, which is a particularly positive result. It is possible to suggest however, that more specific training relating to suspect interviewing could be offered to police interviewers. In particular, this training should emphasise to them the importance of the accuracy of the evidence, demonstrating an understanding of cognitive distortions, and the use of minimisation and maximisation. This training could particularly highlight to interviewing officers, the impact that these variables can have on a suspect's decision to confess or deny, and hence, rates of prosecution in this area. Specific examples and techniques for using these factors are likely to be particularly helpful. The results of this study suggest that future research regarding factors associated with police interviewing approaches is certainly warranted and necessary.

CHAPTER 7. REPORT SUMMARY AND GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

7.1 CHAPTER OVERVIEW

To reiterate the argument we made at the start of this report, there are three key benefits to an offender confessing, which are an increased likelihood of a conviction, the decreased likelihood of a victim being required to testify, and the reduction in costs associated with a lengthy trial and prosecution. We conducted four separate research studies to investigate how humanity, dominance, an understanding of cognitive distortions, minimization, maximization, ethical interviewing, and accuracy and detail of evidence might relate to sex offenders' decisions to confess or deny. Within these studies we have gained qualitative data by seeking the opinions of convicted sex offenders and police interviewers regarding improving police interviewing and regarding the factors associated with an increased likelihood of a confession from a suspect. Additionally, we have obtained equally valuable quantitative data through surveying convicted sex offenders and through experimental work with university students.

In this chapter we provide an overview and summary of the main findings of this research and establish the links between the current research and existing literature. Finally, to conclude this report, we discuss the limitations of this research, as well as implications and suggestions for future research and practice.

7.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF EVIDENCE

The research contained in this report shows that evidence is often critical to suspects' decisions to confess or deny. From the quantitative study investigating convicted sex

offenders' perceptions of how they were interviewed, it was shown that those who confessed perceived their interview to have included more evidence presenting strategies than those who chose to deny. Furthermore, the offenders suggested that for police officers to increase the likelihood of a guilty suspect confessing more evidence presenting strategies should be used. However, with the qualitative study, only two participants mentioned that the evidence against them was a major reason for them confessing and only one mentioned that a lack of evidence would be a reason for not confessing. Nevertheless, in all the cases except one, there was evidence against the offender, other than a confession, and in the majority of cases this was eyewitness evidence. This result may have been due to the interpersonal nature of sexual crimes (Lees, 1996). For example, most of the participants may have simply assumed that there would be witness evidence against them from the victim and so its importance in their own case was taken for granted.

In the experimental study into manipulation of evidence, the hypothesis that inaccurate information would lower the likelihood of a confession was strongly supported. Participants in the inaccurate conditions believed the evidence against them was far weaker than participants in the accurate conditions, and so were less likely to confess in comparison. A possible explanation for why inaccurate evidence reduced their likelihood of confessing is that the mock-suspects may have believed that a jury would not convict them if evidence was erroneous, clearly ignoring the fact that a jury will often have no objective way of telling if evidence is accurate or inaccurate. Importantly, in this experiment virtually all the inaccurate evidence (e.g., clothing, hair colour and style, whether they went through the briefcase before the sports bag) would not be possible to objectively discredit (see also, Kassin, 2005).

Additionally, in the qualitative study some offenders emphasised that the police exaggerating offences in the interview, to the extent where the charges no longer seemed accurate, also made them think about denying, as they felt the interview process was not fair.

We also hypothesized in the experimental study that the more detailed the eyewitness evidence against the suspect, the more likely they would be to confess. This was not the case. Whilst participants believed the evidence against them was more detailed in the detailed condition than the not detailed condition (suggesting a successful manipulation of the variable), this did not increase their perception of the strength of the evidence against them, or their likelihood of confessing. One explanation is that the combination of identification by an eyewitness as well as details concerning the mock-crime they had committed, produced something of a ceiling effect. However, this does not seem to be reflected in the ratings for likelihood of confessing. Perhaps much more detail or corroborating evidence is also required to increase confession rates still further. Alternatively, suspects may not realize quite how important detailed evidence is for jurors' decisions to convict or acquit. If police officers have considerable, detailed, evidence they may need to *explicitly* point out to suspects what impact this is likely to have on a jury (Bell and Loftus, 1988; 1989). Nevertheless, some reservations must be expressed concerning the ecological validity of the experiment. The sample consisted of an undergraduate university population, where the majority of participants were female, and all participants knew they would not suffer any legal consequences regardless of whether they confessed or denied.

The above findings would seem to have clear and important implications for police investigations. Firstly, effectively gathering evidence prior to interviewing a suspect is crucial. An extensive body of literature shows that the way in which an eyewitness is interviewed has a profound impact on the accuracy of the witness's evidence, and past researchers have argued that the police can certainly improve in the area of interviewing victims and witnesses. Importantly, the interpersonal nature of sex offences means that effective interviewing of victims and witnesses is likely to be particularly relevant (e.g., Ceci, & Friedman, 2000; Fisher & Geiselman, 1992; Loftus & Palmer, 1974; Milne & Bull, 1999). Thus, if a greater emphasis is placed on interviewing witnesses effectively and familiarizing oneself with evidence, more credible and accurate evidence is likely to be available to present to the suspect, which is highly likely to have an impact on their decision to confess or deny, as well as the pressure they feel to confess. These results also suggest that fabricating evidence as suggested by Inbau, Reid, Buckley and Jayne (2001), might be a counter-productive process that may reduce a suspect's likelihood of confessing if the suspect is able to recognize errors in the 'evidence' presented to them.

Taken together though, the implications are still clear. Police officers should pay careful attention to the way in which they present evidence to suspects. In particular, they should ensure that evidence is accurate and that suspects are made aware of how detailed evidence is likely to impact on a jury or magistrate. Consequently, getting a suspect to confess to a crime they committed is not likely to be simply a result of effective interrogation techniques only, but rather the culmination of a thorough investigation, especially regarding obtaining accurate information from witnesses prior to interviewing suspects, and effectively presenting that evidence to the suspect.

From the decision-making perspective this suggests that suspects make their decisions based not only on how strong the evidence against them is, but how strong they *perceive* that evidence to be.

Finally, and encouragingly, police participants in this research did generally appear to be aware of the great importance of evidence, and the importance of securing that evidence prior to interviewing the suspect, and effectively presenting that evidence to the suspect in a way that can maximise its impact. Though police officers did not explicitly identify the importance of the *accuracy* of the evidence, which could be addressed in future training, they were aware that strong evidence could make a suspect more likely to confess, particularly by making them believe that they would be found guilty anyway. Police officers also pointed out that presenting evidence in an interview with a suspect could also be useful to highlight points where a suspect had lied, which could be useful in making the complainant appear more reliable, and in highlighting the character of the suspect for the jury.

7.3 HUMANITY, DOMINANCE, AND ETHICAL INTERVIEWING

With regards humanity, dominance and ethical interviewing the results were again consistent and clear. In the quantitative study those who confessed perceived their interview to have been more ethical than those who chose to deny, and these sex offenders suggested that increasing the ethical standard of a police interview with a suspected sex offender would increase the likelihood of a guilty suspect confessing. Similarly, sex offenders who confessed perceived their interviewer to have displayed more humanity than those who denied. Offenders suggested that if humanity was increased compared with their own police interview then the likelihood of a

confession for a guilty offender would be increased. When the sex offenders were tested with the vignettes they suggested that the mock-offender would be more likely to confess if his interviewer displayed higher levels of humanity.

In addition to the above, convicted sex offenders who confessed perceived their interviewer to have displayed less dominance than those who denied. Offenders suggested that if dominance were reduced compared with their own police interview, the likelihood of a confession occurring would be increased. Similarly when participants were tested with the vignettes they suggested that the mock-offender would be more likely to confess if his interviewer displayed lower levels of dominance. The implication of these findings is that dominance may reduce the likelihood of a confession, and so should be avoided when interviewing suspected offenders.

A similar pattern of responses emerges from the qualitative study of sex offenders particularly with regards dominance. The most frequent response concerning what the police could do that would make people less likely to confess was the police being aggressive. This result is consistent with the work of Holmberg and Christianson (2002) who found that suspects were less likely to confess to police officers that were aggressive, hostile, insulting and condemning, or used an interviewing approach characterised by dominance. Again this can also be interpreted from a decision-making perspective. Perhaps a suspect could believe that if a police officer is aggressive when they only *suspect* them of a sexual offence, they may become more aggressive when this is confirmed, thus increasing the perceived consequences of a

confession from that suspect's point of view. Nevertheless, a small minority of participants felt that some might give in to aggression.

Encouragingly again, the views of experienced police interviewers were closely aligned with existing literature, and with the views of the convicted sex offenders with regards suggestions for facilitating confessions and avoiding denials. This produces clear implications for practice. For example, consistent with the convicted offenders, police interviewers were very likely to suggest the importance of rapport, and characteristics consistent with humanity. Police officers most often suggested a humane approach to interviewing, particularly in the early stages of the interview. They often argued that being dominant or aggressive with a suspect would only serve to put them on guard, and to make them defensive, which would interfere with the information gathering process. Again, a small number of police participants argued that it is important to remain flexible in their approach, and argued that sometimes escalation in the interview is necessary. This seems to parallel with the arguments of a small number of the sex offenders. Importantly though, police officers were careful to point out that escalation should only be mild, so that the interview does not include any behaviours which could be perceived as a threat or inducement. In this sense, it appears unlikely that dominance would be utilised by experienced interviewers. We return to this argument later with regards to maximisation.

Importantly, sex offenders who participated in the quantitative study indicated that about half had not decided whether they would confess or deny before they were interviewed. This indicates that interviewing officers have considerable potential to influence whether an offender confesses or denies. Further, Baldwin (1993) found that

4% of suspects changed their accounts from an initial denial to an admission. This point, taken together with the previous point, suggests that the interviewing officer's initial approach and interaction with the suspect is likely to be critical in determining if an undecided suspect will confess or deny. From the decision-making perspective this suggests that suspects make their decisions early in the interview and then commit to those decisions. Thus, the initial experiences with police officers, particularly it seems with regards, ethical behaviour, humanity and dominance, are crucial, and may effect how offenders who are undecided about confessing or not, will ultimately react during the entire interview. It also seems that police interviewers should not be complacent about the possibility that they could, through their approach to interviewing, make a suspect who is initially planning to deny begin to confess and vice versa.

Participants in the qualitative study also emphasised the importance of an interviewer being calm, non-aggressive, fair and respectful as well as assertive. The majority emphasised the importance of maturity and said that gender was not important, with a small minority preferring the interviewing officer to be male for male offenders. Interestingly, a small number of police interviewers also pointed out the impact of demographic variables associated with the interviewer. For example, some officers pointed out the importance of matching the suspects' characteristics with an appropriate interviewer, and pointed out that some suspects will only respond to certain types of interviewers, often based on factors such as gender, age, personality, and experience. Though we cannot directly confirm the importance of these observations here, it is possible to suggest that these variables should be monitored in future research.

7.4 MINIMIZATION AND MAXIMIZATION

Concerning reasons why an offender should confess, participants in the qualitative study emphasised the importance of confessing to receive a more lenient sentence, the belief that it was easier than denying, and the expectation that they would feel less guilty afterwards. Each of these suggestions utilise the decision making model and emphasise taking advantage of a suspect's internal pressure to confess. Again, these approaches can be interpreted as reducing the consequences of confessing. Nevertheless, interviewers should be mindful of the fact that pointing out that an offender is likely to receive a more lenient sentence if they confess may be considered unacceptable practice in many Australian States (Gudjonsson, 2003; Inbau, Reid, Buckley, & Jayne, 2001).

There was no significant difference between confessors and deniers on their perceptions of whether minimization or maximization was used during their interviews suggesting that minimization may not have been a critical component of their decision to confess or deny (see also, Leo, 1996). However, offenders did suggest that a confession would be more likely if their interviewer used more minimization and maximization strategies, suggesting this may be a potentially useful approach in future. However, a number of police officers did comment that they were concerned about using minimization strategies and maximization strategies as they could be viewed as illegal inducements or threats. In this sense, it appears that training in relation to these techniques, if they were to be used, is necessary. For example, according to the authors, it is possible to use maximization and minimization in such a way, as it could be effective, without it being considered an inducement or a threat.

7.5 COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS AND FEELINGS OF GUILT

As mentioned above, sex-offending participants typically reported feeling anxious, guilty, and upset. This information could be of use to an investigating officer. If the officer displays awareness of the offender's feelings of guilt, and explains that the suspect may feel better if they admit to what has happened, this may encourage the suspect to confess. Furthermore, if the police officer shows empathy for the offender's plight, and shows that he or she is willing to listen to the offender's account in a non-judgmental manner, the offender may start to feel less anxious about the interview process, and in turn, about confessing to the officer. From the decision making model in particular, this can be explained by reducing the consequences of confessing in terms of social disapproval and a negative reaction.

Interestingly the experimental results obtained from the university students indicated that participants stated that they felt guiltier when they perceived the evidence against them was strong. One consequence of this might be that police officers can increase feelings of guilt and play on this by collecting and presenting evidence effectively. Previous research and theory (e.g., Gudjonsson, 2003; Gudjonsson and Petursson, 1991; Reik, 1959) have emphasized a causal relationship between feeling guilty and subsequent confessions, suggesting that offenders confess because they wish to get things "off their chest".

The possibility that a suspect is confessing to get things "off their chest" was recognized by a number of the police officers interviewed in this research, however a certain number also believed that very few suspects or offenders ever felt guilt or remorse. It seems therefore, that police perspectives of suspect guilt differ from the

perspectives of offenders. More specifically, as argued previously, sex offenders believed that guilt was common amongst offenders, whilst alternatively police officers believed it was not. Of course, it is possible that the sex offenders were exhibiting socially desirable reporting. For example, the current findings with university students indicate that once an individual has decided to confess they may feel they should explain their confession in terms of their own desire to confess because of feelings of guilt, rather than having been forced to confess because of convincing evidence or other reasons. In this sense the decision to confess appeared to precede the reported feelings of guilt. Clearly, saying you are confessing due to feelings of guilt creates a better impression than saying you are confessing due to strong evidence or police pressure. Nevertheless, it is also possible that police interviewers are incorrectly concluding that the suspects do not feel guilty. Perhaps it is possible that the police could stay more open to the possibility that a suspect does indeed feel guilty, and could make better use of the suspect's guilt throughout the interview.

In addition to the above, those who confessed perceived their interviewer to have displayed a greater understanding of sex offenders' cognitive distortions than those who chose to deny. Sex offenders suggested that increasing displays of an understanding of cognitive distortions would increase the likelihood of a guilty suspect confessing, however, no effect was found from the cognitive distortion condition on confession rates compared with the control condition. As mentioned previously, this may be effective in gaining confessions for two reasons. Firstly, because it shows a level of understanding of the suspect's thinking. Secondly, if the officer talks about these distortions without becoming angry it suggests to the suspect that the officer is less likely to become aggressive if he confesses to the crime.

Findings from interviews with the police however, showed that only one participant addressed the issue of offenders' cognitive distortions, and how these could be utilised in an interview. This suggests that police officers could receive more training in relation to the criminogenic needs and characteristics of sex offenders, and common cognitive distortions, so that they can utilise these in interviews with suspected offenders. Importantly, this is also likely to have the knock-on effect that it may enable officers to display higher levels of humanity, due their increased level of understanding.

7.6 POLICING PERSPECTIVES

Participants in the qualitative study identified a number of characteristics that they felt were desirable for good police interviewers. Participants suggested police officers should be capable, approachable, show high levels of empathy and understanding and the ability to be a good listener. Interestingly, the comparisons between sex offenders and violent offenders indicated that both shared similar experiences of police interviewing and expressed similar views concerning how police officers can best interview to achieve confessions from the guilty. This is a finding at odds with that of Holmberg and Christianson (2002) who found that sex offenders perceived they were treated less well than violent offenders by the Swedish police. This suggests that sex offenders in Queensland may be treated more fairly than those in Sweden, which is a particularly positive and encouraging result for the Queensland Police Service.

The police officers that were interviewed during the current research showed high degrees of professionalism, as well as appreciation of what is required to conduct an effective interview. Officers typically believe that there is no typical sex offender, and

therefore, no typical approach to interviewing these types of offenders. They also generally appear to understand the considerable stigma associated with these offences. It was common for the participants to identify the importance of establishing rapport and putting the suspect at ease at the outset of interview.

Legislative and policy restrictions, such as informing the suspect of their legal rights, legal advice from solicitors, and the formal setting of the interview, were all listed as factors which impact on the likelihood of an interview with the suspect being conducted, as well as the likelihood of a suspect confessing or denying during that interview. Evidence was also often identified as a very important factor in the suspect's decision to confess or deny, while other factors such as parental status, proximity to the victim and relationship with the victim, guilt, personality, socioeconomic status, education, and offending history, were also identified.

An important implication of this study is the finding that in general, police officers' views and opinions of suspected offenders, as well as their approaches to interviewing offenders, are aligned relatively closely with our findings from offenders. This is particularly the case regarding their general acknowledgement of the importance of empathy and rapport building, and their use of evidence. It is possible to suggest however, that more specific training relating to suspect interviewing could be offered to police interviewers. In particular, this training should emphasise to them the importance of the accuracy of the evidence, humanity, demonstrating an understanding of cognitive distortions, and the use of minimisation and maximisation. This training could particularly highlight to interviewing officers, the impact that these variables can have on a suspect's decision to confess or deny, and hence, rates

of prosecution in this area. The results of this study suggest that future research regarding factors associated with police interviewing approaches is certainly warranted and necessary, and is likely to be well received by police officers.

It should certainly be noted here, that any proposals for improving the interviewing of suspects must carefully consider the impact any suggestions will have on the likelihood of false confessions from innocent suspects and other ethical issues (Gudjonsson, 2003). As mentioned in a previous chapter, some police interviewing techniques, for example the “Reid Technique” (Inbau, et al., 2001), have been criticised because they recommend fabricating evidence and applying coercive techniques that may require the police to behave unethically in order to increase confessions, and because they are also likely to increase false confessions. Fortunately, the implications of the present studies however, do not involve actions that are likely to increase either the likelihood of police officers performing unethically, or the likelihood of a false confession. In fact, it could be argued that the reverse is true, and a more ethical and effective interview style is suggested by the research. The evidence presented in this study demonstrates some of the benefits (e.g., increased confession rates) that may occur through greater police professionalism, compassion, and integrity in the conduct of suspect interviews.

7.7 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The most important limitation of the current research is that there is a lack of evaluation of actual police interviews. We have relied on offenders’ perceptions of their interviews and how they can be improved, mock-suspects’ performances in the laboratory, and police officers reports of how they approach interviews. Clearly, a

limitation of this approach is that how people say they will behave and how they behave in the laboratory may not reflect how they actually behave in real situations. Therefore, it is critical that future research investigates how police interviewers are interviewing suspected sex offenders and how suspected sex offenders respond to different techniques. Research in England (Baldwin, 1993) suggests that police interviews may not be as effective as police officers say they are. Furthermore, whilst police culture, at least in Queensland, seems to support effective interviewing strategies, offenders' ratings of police interviews indicates that police interviewers may still have some room to improve.

An important implication of this is that the recommendations presented here for improving police interviewing should be tested in field trials to see if training in these areas does in fact increase confession rates and other measures of performance (including suspects' perceptions of how they were interviewed). Because of the issues surrounding legislation, future research would also seem warranted to identify in what circumstances suspect interviews are ruled as inadmissible and what causes this. This should then be fed back to police officers, who at this stage seem overly cautious with respect to techniques consistent with minimisation and maximisation, as mentioned previously.

Furthermore, many questions remain unanswered. For example, although it is possible to say that collecting and presenting evidence is important, that displaying ethics and humanity are likely to be effective, we still do not know what the best way of doing this is.

7.8 CONCLUSION

There are significant benefits to an offender confessing early in the investigative and prosecutorial process. By increasing rates of confessions of these offenders we reduce the burden on victims, and increase the likelihood of a conviction. These improvements are worth working for, and it is our hope that as a result of this research, future work will be completed that develops this important area.

Taken as a whole, the present studies have the following important implications for increasing the likelihood of a guilty offender confessing. For police officers to obtain more confessions, and hence more convictions in this area, they should adopt a fair, professional, compassionate, non-aggressive, and honest approach. Additionally, evidence must be conscientiously collected, familiarised, and presented to the suspect in a convincing way. Police officers in Queensland at least seem to be supportive of this approach and are moving in this direction. Based on these results, it seems that the most ethical approach to police interviewing may also be the most effective.

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APPENDIX A

Questions and Means and standard deviations for the “own” and “ideal” police interview questionnaires, presented according to interviewing strategy for sex offenders.

Ethical interviewing variables and items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ethical interviewing – Own police interview		
My police interviewer gave me time to comment	3.05	1.17
My police interviewer rushed the interview, and did not allow me time for reflection*	3.02	1.22
My police interviewer appeared to be neutral	2.47	1.20
My police interviewer appeared to be interested in seeking the truth	2.79	1.34
My police interviewer was interested in getting the other side of the story during my interview	2.51	1.18
Ethical interviewing – Ideal police interview		
A police interviewer should give a suspect time to comment	4.43	.50
A police interviewer should rush the interview, and not allow the suspect time for reflection*	4.50	.74
A police interviewer should appear to be neutral	4.12	.82
A police interviewer should appear to be interested in seeking the truth	4.59	.50
A police interviewer should be interested in getting the other side of the story during the interview	4.30	.59

Note. Items marked with an ‘*’ are reverse coded

Humanity variables and items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Humanity – Own police interview		
My police interviewer got to know me before starting the interview	2.58	1.12
My police interviewer showed sympathy towards me	2.50	1.17
My police interviewer tried to understand how I was feeling	2.14	.93
My police interviewer showed a positive attitude towards me	2.44	1.08
My police interviewer was cooperative with me during the interview	2.76	1.19
Humanity – Ideal police interview		
A police interviewer should get to know the suspect before starting the interview	3.91	.94
A police interviewer should show sympathy towards a suspect	2.88	.77
A police interviewer should try to understand how a suspect is feeling	3.95	.65
A police interviewer should show a positive attitude towards a suspect	3.82	.66
A police interviewer should be cooperative with the suspect during the interview	4.07	.59

Dominance variables and items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Dominance – Own police interview		
My police interviewer was calm*	2.95	1.21
My police interviewer was aggressive towards me	3.33	1.28
My police interviewer was friendly*	3.40	1.08
My police interviewer was patient*	3.12	1.21
My police interviewer took a supportive approach with me during the interview*	3.70	1.06
Dominance – Ideal police interview		
A police interviewer should be calm*	1.61	.72
A police interviewer should be aggressive towards the suspect	1.74	.77
A police interviewer should be friendly*	2.28	.70
A police interviewer should be patient*	1.65	.61
A police interviewer should take a supportive approach with the suspect during the interview*	2.27	.76

Note. Items marked with an ‘*’ are reverse coded

Minimization variables and items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Minimization – Own police interview		
My police interviewer told me I would feel better if I confessed	2.76	1.38
My police interviewer said that although the crime was wrong, other people have done worse than me	2.40	1.15
My police interviewer suggested to me that the victim may have exaggerated about the harm caused to them by the offence	2.05	.91
My police interviewer suggested to me, that other factors such as alcohol, drugs and stress caused the offence	1.95	.99
My police interviewer said during the interview, that just because I committed a sexual offence, doesn't mean I am a bad person	2.17	.93
Minimization – Ideal police interview		
A police interviewer should say that the suspect will feel better if they confess	2.95	1.23
A police interviewer should say that although the crime was wrong, other people have done worse than the suspect	2.51	1.01
A police interviewer should suggest to the suspect that the victim may have exaggerated about the harm caused to them by the offence	2.42	1.01
A police interviewer should suggest to the suspect, that other factors such as alcohol, drugs and stress caused the offence	2.66	.94
A police interviewer should say during the interview, that just because the suspect has committed a sexual offence, doesn't mean they are a bad person	2.82	1.06

Maximisation variables and items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Maximisation – Own police interview		
My police interviewer emphasised the impact the crime had on the victim	2.93	1.26
My police interviewer emphasised that the crime would seem worse if I did not give my own account of what happened	2.64	1.23
My police interviewer said that I would feel worse if I did not confess	2.57	1.27
My police interviewer told me that it would be worse for the victim if I did not confess	2.62	1.34
My police interviewer indicated to me, that if others (friends, family) found out that I lied, I would lose their respect	2.33	1.00
Maximisation – Ideal police interview		
A police interviewer should emphasise the impact the crime has had on the victim	3.69	1.14
A police interviewer should emphasise that the crime will seem worse if the suspect does not give their account of what happened	3.00	1.11
A police interviewer should say that the suspect will feel worse if they do not confess	2.79	.97
A police interviewer should tell the suspect that it will be worse for the victim if they do not confess	2.86	1.15
A police interviewer should indicate to the suspect, that if others (friends, family) found out that they lied, the suspect would lose their respect	2.80	.98

Evidence variables and items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Evidence – Own police interview		
My police interviewer told me that the evidence showed that the truth would eventually come out	2.93	1.37
My police interviewer had as much evidence as possible to show me during the interview	1.93	1.00
My police interviewer emphasised the strength of the evidence against me	2.83	1.41
My police interviewer had a very detailed account from my accuser, to read to me during the interview	2.40	1.29
My police interviewer did not collect all the evidence before interviewing me*	2.34	1.39
Evidence – Ideal police interview		
A police interviewer should tell the suspect that the evidence shows that the truth will eventually come out	3.74	.94
A police interviewer should have as much evidence as possible to show the suspect during the interview	4.21	.89
A police interviewer should emphasise the strength of the evidence against the suspect	3.79	.94
A police interviewer should have a very detailed account from the accuser, to read to the suspect during the interview	4.11	.87
A police interviewer does not need to collect all the evidence before interviewing a suspect*	4.00	1.22

Note. Items marked with an ‘*’ are reverse coded

Cognitive distortions variables and items	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Cognitive Distortions – Own police interview		
My police interviewer suggested to me, that I may have believed the victim encouraged me to commit the offence	2.17	1.01
My police interviewer showed an understanding of how people who commit sexual offences think	2.38	1.15
My police interviewer suggested that I may have believed that the victim may have enjoyed, or not have been particularly upset by the offence	2.34	1.08
My police interviewer pointed out that I may have believed that if the victim did not want the sexual offence to occur, they could have done more to prevent it	2.14	.90
My police interviewer pointed out during the interview, that I may have believed that society makes a much bigger deal out of sexual offences than they really are	2.19	.83
Cognitive Distortions – Ideal police interview		
A police interviewer should suggest to the suspect, that the suspect may have believed the victim encouraged them to commit the offence	2.57	1.09
A police interviewer should have an understanding of how people who commit sexual offences think	4.12	.82
A police interviewer should suggest that the suspect may have believed the victim may have enjoyed, or was not particularly upset by the offence	2.37	.85
A police interviewer should point out that the suspect may have believed that if the victim did not want the sexual offence to occur, they could have done more to prevent it	2.59	1.00
A police interviewer should point out during the interview, that the suspect may believe that society makes a much bigger deal out of sexual offences than they really are	2.57	1.32

APPENDIX B

Crime Vignette.

John, a 30 year old man, asked his next door neighbour if she would like to watch television with him. She said, “yes”. His next-door neighbour, Alice, was a twelve year old girl (25 year old woman). Alice and her mother had lived next door to John for about three months. John and Alice had always gotten along very well. John often took Alice to see movies, while her mother was out or at work. During the evening, John had been drinking beer and watching television with Alice. After drinking six bottles of beer, John started to stroke Alice’s hair. She did not say anything. Later on, he tried to kiss her. Alice said “get off”. John grabbed her and lifted up her skirt and pulled down her knickers. Alice became upset and told John to stop and that she wanted to go home. John did not stop, and had sex with her. Alice told her mother what had happened and they reported what had happened to the police. The police asked Alice where John lived and she told them. The police arrested John and he was interviewed by the police.

Interview vignette

Control interview. The interview room at the police station was fairly plain. It contained some furniture and there was also a clock with a white face and black hands hanging on the wall. The room was a pleasant temperature, neither being too hot nor too cold. There was a ceiling light in the room and a light switch by the door. The police officer wore a long sleeved shirt that buttoned up at the front and at the wrists. He also wore long gray trousers, a pair of gray socks, and simple black lace-up shoes. He also had a standard silver watch on his left wrist. The police officer outlined the

evidence against John. The police officer said that Alice had identified John as the offender.

Humanity interview. The interview room was plain. The police officer wore a long sleeved shirt that buttoned up at the front and at the wrists. He also wore gray trousers, a pair of gray socks, and black lace-up shoes. He also had a standard silver watch on his left wrist. The police officer took time to get to know John before starting the interview. The police officer also seemed to be trying to understand just how John was feeling. The police officer outlined the evidence against John. The police officer said that Alice had identified John as the offender. The police officer showed sympathy towards John, and seemed to show a positive attitude towards him. The police officer was also co-operative with John throughout the interview.

Dominance interview. The interview room at the police station was fairly plain. The room was a pleasant temperature. The police officer wore a long sleeved shirt that buttoned up at the front and at the wrists. He also wore gray trousers, a pair of gray socks, and black lace-up shoes. He also had a standard silver watch on his left wrist. After starting the interview, the police officer showed some agitation towards John. The police officer was also aggressive towards John. The police officer outlined the evidence against John. The police officer said that Alice had identified John as the offender. The police officer was impatient towards John. The police officer was unfriendly towards John. The police officer was also unsupportive towards John during the interview.

Cognitive distortions. The police officer outlined the evidence against John. The police officer said that Alice had identified John as the offender. The police officer suggested that John may have believed that Alice had encouraged him to commit the offence. The police officer showed an understanding of how people who commit sexual offences think. The police officer suggested that maybe John believed that Alice had enjoyed, or may not have been particularly upset by the offence. The police officer suggested that John may believe that society makes a much bigger deal out of sexual offences than they really are. The police officer suggested that John may believe that if John did not want the sexual offence to occur, she could have done more to prevent it.