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PEACE-ful Interviewing/Interrogation

What Research Can Tell Us

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10.1 The “Old” Way

In January 1998 in the High Court in London a man was awarded £200,000 compensation relating to his arrest and police interviews in 1987, and to his subsequent years in prison. A national newspaper (the *Daily Telegraph*, January 20, 1998, p. 9) reported that

An innocent man...spent “five hellish years” in jail after being beaten by a detective and forced to sign a confession...The court heard how (he)...was butted and punched by a detective and threatened with injection by a syringe.

While this case may well be unusual, it affects people’s expectations of what can happen in investigative interviews.

In many countries, the traditional way that investigators have interrogated those whom they suspect of having information relevant to possible wrongdoing has involved a pressurizing or oppressive approach. For example:

- In India a survey found that some police officers said that they use a variety of intimidation techniques (Alison, Sarangi, & Wright, 2008).
- The “Reid approach,” widely used in the USA (and exported to other countries), has been criticized for being sufficiently coercive to cause false confessions (Leo, 2008).
- In North America a 2007 analysis of 11 guidance books/manuals found that among the tactics most widely recommended were “minimization,” “maximization,” and the use/mention of false evidence (Kassin et al., 2007).

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10.1.1 Reasons for Coercion

One of the major assumptions underlying justification for the use of coercive interrogation techniques is the pervasive, commonsense belief that “suspects almost never confess spontaneously but virtually always in response to police pressure” (Leo, 2008, p. 162) and that “Confessions, especially to serious crimes, are rarely made spontaneously. Rather they are actively elicited... typically after sustained psychological pressure” (Leo, 2008, p. 119).

10.1.2 Little Research

Interviews with suspects and with witnesses/victims are of utmost importance to society. They have, therefore, attracted extensive attention worldwide from the general public and the media as well as from professionals, such as lawyers and a few psychologists. Their nature, however, has rather rarely been scrutinized in detail in published research because such interviews are not usually made available to “outside” researchers.

In most countries there has to date been little or no constructive interaction between psychologists and the police/other organizations concerning how best to interview people. This lack of interaction created a “vacuum” that drew police and others around the world to guidance on interviewing that had not had the benefit of being informed by published psychological research and theory.

Up to the mid-1980s almost no substantial guidance was available anywhere in the world to investigators on how best to conduct interviews. Behavioral science researchers, such as psychologists, had ignored this topic and organizations (such as the police) were very suspicious of “outside” researchers (who seemed in those days to do little other than criticize).

Into this vacuum came a book entitled *Criminal Interrogation and Confessions* (Inbau, Reid, & Buckley, 1986) that recommended a number of procedures that could be used in persuading a person deemed by the interrogator to be a liar to confess. These have been trained/adopted, and some were already in use, by a considerable number of investigators around the world. Unfortunately, subsequent work by psychologists and others (e.g. Gudjonsson, 2003; Memon, Vrij, & Bull, 2003) argues that some of the recommended procedures may, among other negative outcomes, cause false confessions, partly because they may well be coercive.

10.1.3 Unethical Behavior

Notably, in 1993, Williamson (a senior police officer in London) stated that “Unethical behaviour by interrogators has undermined public confidence and left the police service with a serious skills deficit in its ability to obtain evidence

through questioning” (p. 107). Williamson also pointed out that “it does not take much skill to beat a confession out of a suspect detained in police custody” or “much skill to fabricate a confession and allege that it was made during police questioning” (p. 107). However, he noted that “The police in this country would correctly deny that such things happen but unfortunately a considerable proportion of the general public thinks that it happens regularly” (p. 107).

Much more recently Alison and colleagues stated that nowadays “there is compelling evidence that coercion...and the attempted debasement and humiliation of suspects creates significant long term disadvantages and elevates future threats, without securing any significant life-saving intelligence” (Alison, Alison, Noone, Elntib, & Christiansen, 2013).

In their research study they examined 288 hours of interviews with 29 terrorist suspects recorded in the UK. These researchers’ analyses of the “real-life” interviews with those suspected of having information about terrorism found that a type of interviewing was associated with the obtaining of more (relevant) information from these interviewees. This (more effective) type of interviewing they called “motivational interviewing.” In part this type of interviewing, they noted, is similar to that studied by prior researchers – for example, they stated that “Bull and Cherryman (1996) identified the presence of the following qualities in ‘skilful’ police interviews:...communication skills, empathy, flexibility, open-mindedness, clear structure, and open questions” (p. 413).

Alison et al. (2013) commented regarding their analyses of real-life interviews with terrorism suspects that “key elements included...developing discrepancies...a more challenge-oriented style at key points...a very, ‘straight and neutral’ presentation of evidence with an invitation to the suspect to assist in explaining this” (p. 427). (I will return to this type of interviewing later.)

10.2 Suspects’ Views

The belief that perpetrators will deny being involved in serious wrongdoing and will not willingly admit/confess has not benefited from research on the views of offenders themselves. However, research involving offenders suggests that only a minority enter the police interview/interrogation with their mind set on denial (see Des Lauriers-Varin & St-Yves, 2006).

For example, in Australia, Keibell, Hurren, and Mazerolle (2006) found that only half of the convicted sex offenders with whom they held a research interview said that they had entered the police interview having already decided whether to deny or confess. In fact, fewer than 20% had planned to deny and around 30% had planned to confess. The other 50% entered the police interview not yet having decided whether to deny or confess.

10.2.1 Reactance

Kebbell et al. (2006) noted that some guilty suspects who (prior to and/or at the beginning of the interview) may indeed be considering whether to confess may subsequently decide not to simply because of the way they are being interviewed. Such “psychological reactance” has also been mentioned by Gudjonsson (2003) and by Holmberg and Christianson (2002) among others, but the frequency with which it occurs in the interviewing of suspects is deserving of much greater research attention.

Whether denial or admittance occurred was related by Holmberg and Christianson (2002) to the reported style of interviewing. They found a relationship between the interviewees’ reactions and denial/admittance, in that those who reported being frightened, stressed, or insulted were less likely to have admitted. These Swedish researchers concluded that a “dominant interviewing style is associated with suspects denying crime” (p. 42).

10.2.2 Early Revelation of Evidence/Information

This “old” emphasis on trying to persuade suspects to confess could probably explain why Moston, Stephenson, and Williamson (1992) found in England that in the majority of several hundred (taped) interviews the police spent little time, if any, trying to obtain the suspects’ accounts of events. Instead they soon (after their interviews/interrogations commenced) revealed all the “incriminating” information they had and then accused the suspects of the offense (in the hope that suspects would make the decision to confess).

More recently in Taiwan in their survey of several hundred detectives/interviewers, Tsan-Chang Lin and Chih-Hung Shih (2013) found that a substantial proportion (especially of those who had not received training) indicated that they usually commenced their interrogations/interviews by revealing “evidence of guilt.”

Early revelation to suspects of incriminating information/evidence may well assist liars (e.g. guilty suspects) to incorporate aspects of it into their accounts. Early revelation also runs the risk, especially in vulnerable people (Gudjonsson, 2003), of innocent suspects then involuntarily or voluntarily including some of this information in their subsequent accounts/confessions.

10.3 The 1984 Police and Criminal Evidence Act

In England and Wales in the mid-1980s in light of (1) various decisions by the (national) Court of Appeal to quash previous convictions based on confessions that were “unreliable” (e.g. because of police behavior) and (2) media and public concern about police interviewing, the government brought in the Police

and Criminal Evidence Act, which mandated that from 1986 all interviews with suspects be recorded (e.g. on audiotape).

10.3.1 Early Research

In 1992 the Home Office (part of the government in England and Wales) published the pioneering research by Baldwin that it had commissioned (summarized in Baldwin, 1993). Prior to this very little research had been published on what actually goes on in police interviews. Baldwin found in his analysis of interviews recorded soon after 1986 that “Over a third of all suspects admitted culpability from the outset” (p. 335), perhaps because of the police strategy of revealing to suspects at the beginning of the interview all of the evidence the police had against them. (If the evidence is strong some people confess.)

In only 20 of the 600 interviews Baldwin examined did suspects

change their story in the course of an interview. In only nine of these cases was the change of heart attributable to the persuasive skills of the interviewer, and even here only three involved offences of any seriousness... The great majority of suspects stick to their starting position – whether admission, denial, or somewhere in between – regardless of how the interview is conducted. (p. 333)

Pearse and Gudjonsson (1997) found a similar thing regarding interviews conducted in the late 1980s in England.

10.3.2 A Major Change

The studies that I have so far mentioned (and a small number of others that I don't have space to mention; see Milne & Bull, 1999, for a comprehensive review) all concerned interviews conducted before a major change in police interviewer training occurred in England and Wales. Indeed, such studies brought about the change. This change involved a number of highly experienced police investigators forming a working party (in 1991) to develop up-to-date training on interviewing/interrogating. In light of their deliberations they recommended what they called the “PEACE” model/approach. This change began in 1992 and involved guidance documents and training courses that all police interviewers must attend and which contained much research-based cognitive and social psychology (Milne & Bull, 1999).

Draft reports of the “early” research studies mentioned above (conducted soon after the recording of interviews with suspects became mandatory in 1986) led the senior London police officer Tom Williamson to convene a different small working party of detectives and psychologists (including Eric Shepherd, Stephen Moston, and myself) in 1990 that produced a two-volume

(unpublished) overview the following year, largely written by Moston, of aspects of psychology that might be useful to improving such interviewing/interrogating.

This overview was made available to the national team of detectives that was developing PEACE. Once that team of detectives had written their guidance documents they sent drafts to me, asking if they had “got the psychology correct.” They had indeed.

10.4 The Principles of the 1992 PEACE Approach

The PEACE approach is based on a number of basic principles that were chosen by the police. These include:

- 1) “The purpose of investigative interviewing is to obtain accurate and reliable information from suspects, witnesses or victims in order to discover the truth about matters under investigation.”
- 2) “Interviews should be approached with an open mind. Information obtained from the person who is being interviewed should always be tested against what the investigator already knows or what can reasonably be established.”

10.4.1 What is PEACE?

P = Planning and Preparation

E = Explain and Engage

A = Account (i.e. free narrative followed by different question types – as researched by cognitive psychologists)

C = Closure

E = Evaluation

This PEACE approach has also been adopted by many other investigative agencies in the UK (e.g. internal investigators within banks, benefit fraud investigators) and a growing number of organizations around the world. This approach differs considerably from the methods employed in some other countries (which may involve oppression and/or coercion). (For more on the early evolution of the notion of “investigative interviewing” see Williamson, 1993; and the Preface in Bull, Valentine, & Williamson, 2009.)

10.4.2 The 1992 Government Memorandum on Interviewing Children/Adolescents

In 1990 I was commissioned (together with a law professor) to draft for the government in England the official “Memorandum of Good Practice on

Video-Recorded Interviews with Child Witnesses for Criminal Proceedings.” (These were the first type of witness interviews to regularly be video-recorded in England.) In order to produce this I naturally read all of the then available literature of relevance (which was not as substantial as it is today). It was clear to me that the interviewing of young persons should follow the phased procedure of

- 1) establish rapport;
- 2) try to obtain a “free narrative” account;
- 3) only then ask questions (of various types in an appropriate order);
- 4) closure.

10.4.3 “Achieving Best Evidence” (2002)

In 2000 I was again commissioned by the government (with a small team of others) to produce the official guidance document “Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance on Interviewing Victims and Witnesses” that was published in 2002. This document (1) updated the 1992 “Memorandum” that I had co-drafted on how to interview children/adolescents and (2) had a new, substantial chapter (written by me) on how to interview “vulnerable” people. This 2002 guidance document retained the phased approach. The latest (2011) version is available online (Crown Prosecution Service [CPS], 2018).

10.4.4 Some Studies of PEACE: Experienced Detectives’ Beliefs

In the mid-1990s I was asked by the Home Office to identify any skills gaps in specialist police interviews (e.g. of suspects in serious cases and/or adolescent suspects and/or suspects with a low IQ) conducted by PEACE-trained, experienced investigators. We first asked experienced detectives what they believed the most important skills were, and from their responses plus the relevant professional and academic literature we compiled a questionnaire. Then a much larger sample of police detectives/interviewers was asked to say how necessary each of the skills listed in the questionnaire was. The skills deemed most necessary included (in rank order):

- listening
- preparation
- questioning
- knowledge of subject
- flexibility
- open-mindedness
- rapport
- compassion/empathy

We then obtained recordings of specialist interviews with suspects. Each of the four experts on investigative interviewing independently rated these for the 28 skills (plus for “overall skill level”) identified in our prior work (i.e. the questionnaires mentioned above). We were interested to see if these raters would agree, especially since Baldwin (1993) had advised that “Anyone seeking to make some evaluation of interviewing practices soon discovers (as do interviewers themselves) that there are very few ground rules. This means that there can be no guarantee that different people would reach the same assessments of the quality of any particular interview” (p. 329). We found significant agreement among our four raters.

The skills that differentiated between interviews judged as “skilled” and those judged as “not skilled” were:

- communication skills
- empathy/compassion
- flexibility
- keeps interviewee to relevant topics
- responds to what interviewee says
- open-mindedness
- use of closed questions
- interview has structure
- use of open questions
- appropriate use of pauses and silences

Even in the more skilled interviews some skills were not that often present, these being:

- appropriate use of pauses and silences
- avoidance of using closed questions
- flexibility
- empathy/compassion

Even in the less-skilled interviews some skills were often present, for example:

- not releasing all of the information at the beginning;
- absence of (a) inappropriate interruptions, (b) undue pressure, (c) long/complex questions, (d) overtalking.

These latter are skills that seemed to have been absent in earlier studies (i.e. of interviews prior to PEACE).

10.5 Is the PEACE Model/Approach Effective?

In our study of 142 interviews with people who may have been involved in benefit fraud we examined whether interviewing in a way that is compatible with the PEACE approach bore any relationship to the actual outcomes of

these interviews (Walsh & Bull, 2010). Overall we found that better PEACE interviewing was associated with securing a greater number of comprehensive accounts, including exculpatory ones as well as admissions/confessions.

However, much of the interviewing was not that skilled. For example, with regard to the “account” phase, of the 20 skills evaluated within this phase, that of “keeping suspect to relevant topics” achieved the highest overall rating but this was only at the “acceptable” level. The overall ratings for “active listening” and “encourages suspect to give an account” were just below the “acceptable” level. The “account” skills that were rarely demonstrated at a skilled or acceptable level included “use of pauses and silences,” “summarizing what the suspect has so far said,” and “flexibility.”

For every interview for each phase (i.e. planning, engage and explain, account, closure) and each skill within a phase we classified that skill as being demonstrated either at an “acceptable or above” level (i.e. “skilled” or “highly skilled”) or at an “unacceptable” level (i.e. “not quite adequate” or “needs training”). For these 142 interviews we also innovatively examined whether interviewing in a way that is compatible with the PEACE approach bore any relationship to the actual outcomes of these interviews. Those interviews that scored higher (overall) for planning skills were associated with more comprehensive accounts or full confessions than were those interviews which scored lower for planning.

For engage and explain, those interviews that scored lower (overall) were associated with more “denied offense” or only “partial admission” outcomes than were those interviews that scored higher.

For the account phase, several significant positive associations between interview skills and interview outcomes were found, including for “encourages suspect to give an account,” “develops topics,” “uses appropriate questions,” “explores received information,” “open-mindedness,” “active listening,” and “cognitive interviewing.”

Overall, 63% of those interviews rated as satisfactory or above for the account phase obtained a comprehensive account or a full confession whereas only 12% of those rated as “needs further training” did so.

10.5.1 Is Rapport Effective?

We also examined rapport in these benefit fraud interviews (Walsh & Bull, 2012a). We found that opportunities were often missed to build rapport in the initial stages. Also, where some rapport had initially been built, it was not always maintained, partly because some the tasks undertaken later in the interview (which may well have assisted rapport maintenance) were often conducted poorly. In terms of the effects of rapport we found that some of the interviewers they assessed as “at or above PEACE standard” when building rapport in the opening engage and explain phase regressed in the account phase.

In fact 40% of those who were rated regarding rapport development as “satisfactory” in the engage and explain phase fell below the minimum acceptable PEACE standard regarding rapport maintenance in the subsequent account phase. Moreover, all of those rated as “skilled” at rapport building in the engage and explain stage failed to maintain this standard of performance, with half of them being rated as “no more than satisfactory” and the other half being “unsatisfactory” at sustaining rapport in the account phase.

When examining the relationships between either rapport building/rapport maintenance and subsequent interview outcomes, those interviewers who were rated as at or above PEACE standard of performance in their rapport-building skills in the account phase were, regardless of the quality of rapport-building performance in the engage and explain phase, three times as likely to achieve either a comprehensive account from the interviewees than those who were assessed as below minimum acceptable standards.

These findings suggest that rapport maintenance (that will have involved rapport building) is more strongly associated with the preferred outcome than is rapport building. Interviewers rated as at or above PEACE standard in *both* their rapport-building and maintenance skills were over five times more likely to obtain satisfactory outcomes.

10.5.2 Overcoming Denials/Noncooperation

We also examined how the interviewers attempted to overcome suspects' initial denials of knowing about wrongdoing (Walsh & Bull, 2012b). We assessed 85 interviews with suspects of benefit fraud not only for interviewer tactics and skills/other attributes but also for interviewee movement/“shift” to providing relevant information.

It was found that shifting from denying to providing relevant, incriminating information indicating guilt/admissions/confessions more often occurred when certain tactics and skills/other attributes were present (many of which are recommended by PEACE).

Of the 22 skills/tactics examined, 13 were found to significantly differentiate between interviews in which suspects shifted and those where they did not shift, these being disclosure of evidence; emphasizing contradictions (*note these two*); encouraging account; gentle prods; open questions; probing questions; repetitive questioning; persistence; positive confrontation; providing appropriate structure; regular summarizing; showing concern; and silence.

Skills or tactics found not to be effective in our study of “overcoming denials” were maximization; minimization; intimidation; challenging the account; interruptions; leading questions; suggesting a scenario; and situational futility. Some of these tactics have traditionally been part of training in the USA and in other countries (e.g. Inbau, Reid, & Buckley, 1986).

In a different study, around 2002 Stavroula Soukara and I managed to gain access to a sample of police interviews with suspects in a variety of cases who had shifted during the interview from denying the crime to admitting it. We examined the tactics being demonstrated by the interviewers during each 5-minute segment of every one of the (special) 40 interviews. We were particularly interested in the tactics/skills being used by the interviewer at the time of the (greatest) shift from denying to admitting and in the two 5-minute segments leading up to that shift. We found that the tactics most demonstrated at these crucial times were “disclosure of information” and “asking open questions” (Bull & Soukara, 2010).

During our data analyses (in around 2003) I noted that in these particular interviews the “disclosing of evidence” had been going on for considerable periods of time prior to the shifts. This led me to think that it may be the gradual/incremental disclosure of information/evidence that may be crucial, but it was only several years later that I was able to obtain research funding to empirically examine this notion (described below).

Professor Aldert Vrij (my colleague at Portsmouth University, where I worked until 2004) noted in 2006 that

Rather than presenting the evidence at the beginning of the interview, as suggested in police interview manuals (Inbau, Reid, Buckley, & Jayne, 2001), interviewees could be asked to tell their story before the interviewer presents the evidence...Whether these interview styles actually work and will benefit lie detectors is currently unknown. (*Vrij, Akehurst, Brown, & Mann, 2006*)

10.5.3 The Strategic Use of Evidence (SUE) Technique

In Sweden Granhag, Stromwall, and Hartwig (2007) emphasized that investigative interviewers often have available to them some potentially incriminating information regarding the suspect they are about to interview. (Indeed, we might add, this is one of the main reasons why people become suspects.) However, Granhag and colleagues stated that (1) little research has been conducted on how such information is, or could be, used during interviews, and (2) “most interviewing and interrogation manuals were (and still are) silent on this issue” (2007, p. 25). In their pioneering study, Hartwig, Granhag, Stromwall, and Kronkvist (2006) found that “late” revelation of such information resulted in better truth/lie detection than did “early” revelation.

10.5.4 The “Grimace” Approach

Our research has introduced an interviewing procedure (part of my GRIMACE approach) in which the interviewer in a planned way *gradually* lets the suspect

know what relevant information/evidence the interviewer has available. (A grimace can be defined as “a facial expression of pain or strong dislike.”) This involves:

- 1) **Gathering Reliable Information/evidence** before interviewing.
- 2) **Motivating** a “free recall” Account from suspects.
- 3) During the questioning phase, **Challenging** the suspect **Effectively** (i.e. gradually/incrementally, using the evidence/information to point out contradictions etc.) about what the suspect said in their “free recall.”

In each of our two innovative studies on this we used three interview types:

Early: potentially incriminating evidence is presented *in the initial stages* of the interview procedure, before asking suspects for a free account (what some police in the UK used to do and is still done in several countries).

Late: potentially incriminating evidence is presented *at the end* of the interview procedure (Hartwig et al., 2006).

Gradual: planned but *gradual* presentation of potentially incriminating evidence, post-free account, during the questioning phase (Bull, 2014; Bull & Soukara, 2010; Dando & Bull, 2011; Dando, Bull, Ormerod, & Sandham, 2015).

In these studies participants took part in a very engaging task either as “builders” (who largely told the truth in their subsequent interviews) or as “terrorists” (who largely lied in the interviews). These interviews were video-recorded. After their interview participants were asked to indicate how much cognitive effort/demand their interview caused them.

In our first study a sample of police officers watched video-recordings of 30 entire interviews (10 from each of the three evidence disclosure conditions: five builders and five terrorists). For each interview (there were 120 in total that were watched), they were asked to decide whether the interviewee was being deceptive (i.e. a “terrorist”). (Chance performance would achieve a detection rate of 50%.)

Detecting terrorists (liars):

- early = 55%
- late = 66%
- gradual = 76%

Detecting builders (truth-tellers):

- early = 56%
- late = 57%
- gradual = 72%

For “cognitive demand” the builders and terrorists reported that both “late” and “gradual” were more demanding than “early.” For terrorists, “gradual” was

reported as the most cognitively demanding. (Very similar findings also occurred in our second study.)

Our second study used several experienced police interviewers. The police interviewers had an average of 25 years' interviewing experience. Each of them conducted 30 interviews (10 of each type of information disclosure, partly to see if detectives can actually change the way in which they disclose information). For each of the three types/timings of information disclosure, five of the suspects were "terrorists" and five "builders." (Of course, the interviewers were not told this.)

At the end of each of their interviews these very experienced interviewers had to decide whether the interviewee had been lying or not (i.e. terrorist or builder). They achieved the following levels of performance

For "terrorists"	For "builders"
early = 53%	early = 47%
late = 64%	late = 42%
gradual = 73%	gradual = 66%

The average detection levels achieved for our "gradual" style of information revelation of 69.5% in this second study and 74% in our first study are among the highest ever found.

In another study of the possible effectiveness of gradual disclosure of information by the interviewer we used a sample of 70 real-life tape-recorded interviews with people suspected of benefit fraud (Walsh & Bull, 2015). We found that when evidence was *disclosed gradually* interviews were generally *more skilled* and largely involved the *gaining of comprehensive accounts*, whereas when evidence was disclosed *either early or very late*, such interviews were found to be *less skilled and less likely to involve the gaining of comprehensive accounts*.

10.6 Juveniles/Children

Clemens et al. (2010) were the first to explore whether "late" revelation (compared to "early") would facilitate lie detection regarding 12- to 14-year-olds who participated in an event. The children were subsequently interviewed and some information/evidence possibly incriminating them was disclosed at the beginning or toward the end of the interview. When asked questions, the liars' statements tended to be more inconsistent with the evidence. When the "late" approach was employed, guilty children were less likely to mention in their free recall the incriminating evidence. When the information/evidence was disclosed at the beginning of the interview, observer truth/lie detection accuracy rate was at chance level (55%), but when the "late" approach was used this exceeded chance level (63%).

In our first child study (Lingwood & Bull, 2013), 12- to 14-year-olds were asked to commit or not to commit a mock crime, and at interview to deny involvement in this crime. (Prior to interview two items of information about each participant's behavior were made available to the interviewer but this was not enough to enable determination of who had committed the crime.) The interviewer revealed such information either at the beginning of the interview (the "traditional method"), or at the end, or gradually. As might be expected, liars omitted more crime-related information/details and their statements were significantly more inconsistent with the information/evidence known to/disclosed by the interviewer. The timing of the interviewer's evidence/information revelation had a significant association with liars' (a) mentioning during their free recall some of this information and (b) the total number of details they mentioned in free recall.

In our other study (McDougall & Bull, 2015), the gradual revelation to teenagers of possibly incriminating information (seven items), compared to the early revelation, was associated in liars with more within-statement inconsistency for three of these items.

10.7 A Recent Overview

In a review of what may contribute to being a good or effective interviewer, I presented a comprehensive overview of the published literature on (1) what is believed and (2) what is actually known about the characteristics that may contribute to people being good or effective investigative interviewers (Bull, 2013).

10.7.1 Beliefs

One of the main points included in my summary of the available information was that in their overview of what constitutes best practice when interviewing people who may possess "incriminating" information yet may usually be unwilling to divulge this (e.g. suspected sex offenders), Read, Powell, Kebbell, and Milne (2009) noted that when Powell asked officers who were perceived as being particularly good at engaging threatened and marginalized communities (e.g. Australian aboriginals), courtesy, respect, patience, and honesty were perceived by these officers to be their most valued professional assets.

In their survey of interviewers (from a variety of countries) working on criminal investigations or on intelligence issues, Sivasubramaniam and Goodman-Delahunty (2013) reported that being patient, showing kindness, respect, and concern, and appealing to cooperation were rated highly (as were confronting with evidence of guilt, identifying contradictions in story). Various forms of "mild" coercion were not rated at all highly.

In their survey of human intelligence (“HUMINT”) interviewers’ views on “What qualities make a good interrogator?” Russano and Narchet (2013) found “interpersonal skills” to be most frequently mentioned, followed by “patience,” “flexible/adaptable,” “ability to empathize,” “good communicator,” and “good listener.” Among Russano and Narchet’s (2013) participants were some with experience of interviewing “high-value targets” and these were unanimous that rapport building is the most effective approach.

10.7.2 The Actual Relationship

The actual relationship between interviewer characteristics and interview outcome/information gain was studied in Japan by Otsuka, Wachi, Watanabe, Yokota, and Kuraishi (2011). Police officers ($n = 274$) who interviewed adult suspects (who denied having committed a crime when arrested but later confessed during or after being interviewed) filled in a questionnaire which included their level of “empathic understanding.” For most types of crime studied (i.e. murder, rape, robbery) a significant positive association was found between officers’ (self-reported) “level of empathic understanding” and “full confessions.”

Another country (in addition to Japan) where relevant research is now being carried out is South Korea. There the senior police officer Roon Yi (unpublished) recently found that dominant interview tactics had a negative influence on confessing/the provision of relevant information but that “felt respect” was significantly associated with confessing.

In a study of people detained and interviewed suspected of having knowledge relating to terrorism (in e.g. Sri Lanka or Indonesia), Goodman-Delahunty, Dhami, and Martschuk (2014) found that “detainees were more likely to disclose meaningful information” in “response to social strategies” and that “Disclosures were more complete in response to non-coercive strategies, especially rapport-building and procedural fairness elements of respect.”

Another of our studies (Leahy-Harland & Bull, 2017) focused exclusively on real-life taped interviews with serious crime suspects. It examined the strategies used and types of questions asked by police, and suspects’ responses to these. The information source was audiotape-recorded interviews with 56 suspects. These recordings were obtained from 11 police services across England and Wales and were analyzed using a specially designed coding frame. It was found that interviewers employed a range of strategies, with “presentation of evidence” and “challenge” being the most frequently used. Closed questions were the type of question by far the most frequently used, and open questions, although less frequent, were found to occur more during the opening phases of the interviews. The frequency of ineffective question types (e.g. negative, repetitive, multiple) was low.

We found a number of significant associations between interviewer strategies and suspect responses. Rapport/empathy and open-type questions were

associated with an increased likelihood of suspects admitting the offense whilst “describing trauma,” and “negative questions” were associated with a decreased likelihood. We also found that interviewers of these suspected murderers and rapists did not demonstrate a “dominating approach” in these long-duration interviews. We also examined which strategies were associated with these interviewees continuing to respond relevantly and found *positive associations* for “rapport/empathy,” “presentation of evidence,” “requests attention,” but *negative associations* for “explicitly asks for account/tell truth,” “emphasizes seriousness of offense,” and “situational futility.”

10.8 “PEACE” in Our Time?

In light of psychological research such as that described above, a growing number of countries and organizations have decided to adopt the PEACE approach of investigative interviewing. Indeed, in 2016 the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Juan E. Méndez) submitted his report that was then transmitted by the UN Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly. In this publicly available report (https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/839995/files/A_71_298-EN.pdf) the summary stated that:

The Special Rapporteur...advocates the development of a universal protocol identifying a set of standards for non-coercive interviewing methods and procedural safeguards that ought, as a matter of law and policy, to be applied at a minimum to all interviews by law enforcement officials, military and intelligence personnel and other bodies with investigative mandates.

When mentioning this “universal protocol” the UN Special Rapporteur noted that:

Encouragingly, some States have moved away from accusatorial, manipulative and confession-driven interviewing models with a view to increasing accurate and reliable information and minimizing the risks of unreliable information and miscarriages of justice.

and that

The essence of an alternative information-gathering model was first captured by the PEACE model of interviewing adopted in 1992 in England and Wales...investigative interviewing can provide positive guidance for the protocol.

Furthermore the Special Rapporteur stated that:

investigative interviewing...comprises a number of essential elements that are key to the prevention of mistreatment and coercion and help to guarantee effectiveness. Interviewers must, in particular, seek to obtain accurate and reliable information in the pursuit of truth; gather all available evidence pertinent to a case before beginning interviews; prepare and plan interviews based on that evidence; maintain a professional, fair and respectful attitude during questioning; establish and maintain a rapport with the interviewee; allow the interviewee to give his or her free and uninterrupted account of the events; use open-ended questions and active listening; scrutinize the interviewee's account and analyse the information obtained against previously available information or evidence; and evaluate each interview with a view to learning and developing additional skills.

In particular (and in light of relevant research such as that mentioned earlier in this chapter), the Rapporteur emphasized that:

The development and maintenance of rapport is also a crucial determinant of effective non-coercive interviews. Rapport can help to reduce the interviewee's anxiety, anger or distress, while increasing the likelihood of obtaining more complete and reliable information.

In my opinion the Special Rapporteur has recommended to the United Nations a model of interviewing (replacing "interrogation") that is firmly based on the available research evidence largely derived from modern psychological work.

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