

COGNITION IN ACTION

LECTURE FIVE: COGNITION IN FORENSIC SETTINGS II

Dr Kate Williams

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INTERVIEWING EYEWITNESSES

- Brief background:
 - 1970s:
 - although police spent most of their shift talking to the public, very few had formal training on how to do this.
 - Rand corporation (1975): the aspects that solved a case were completeness and accuracy of eyewitness report
 - The report was whatever information police could get out of an eyewitness

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INTERVIEWING EYEWITNESSES

- Mid 1980s: 'Standard Police Interview' used to gather account of an EW.
 - Interviewer driven with question-answer format
 - But lots of interruptions
- This shifted to then request narrative from the EW
 - Specific Qs asked in order to clarify points or expand on info
 - Repeated questioning used to test for consistency
- No specific memory techniques to aid recall.
- Gives implication of standardisation but in fact it is not.
 - Instead based on experience of interviewer/common sense

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INTERVIEWING WITNESSES

- Solid interview techniques were required
- Linked to this, Loftus and Zanni (1975) believed the phrasing of questions was critical
 - Difference between definite ("the") vs. indefinite article ("a").
- Furthering this, Hillgard and Loftus (1979) believed the ordering of questions was key:
 - EW should report incident in own words first – aims to reduce interviewer influencing EVV with leading Qs or post-event info.
 - Info provided from free recall Q more accurate than info given in response to specific Q

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INTERVIEWING EYEWITNESSES

- But free recall may be missing details police want to know.
 - Police would need to ask their specific questions after the witness had provided their free recall to avoid misleading them.
- The suitability of conducting repeated questioning is also an aspect that must be considered
 - Critical in terms of it strengthening memory and facilitating performance (which is useful if there is a long time between event and court case)
- However, difficult to continuously go over everything, thus items that have not been questioned are forgotten – sometimes even more so than if no questioning was conducted at all (RIF effect).

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INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES – REPEATED QUESTIONING

Shaw, Bjork, and Handel (1995)

Wallet stolen from student halls: Police called & Ps view slides:
8 sweatshirts / 8 textbooks

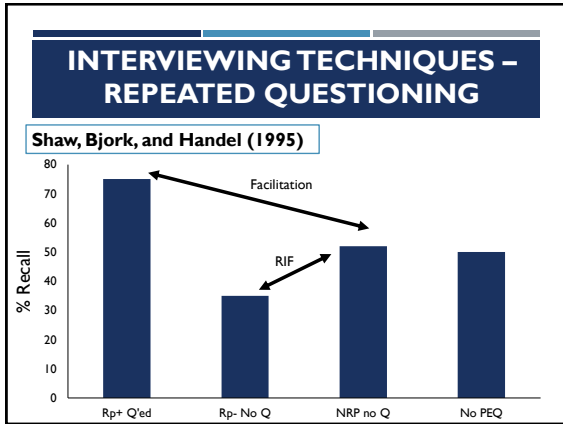


Incomplete PEQ takes place for ½ items from one category.
No items from another category questioned

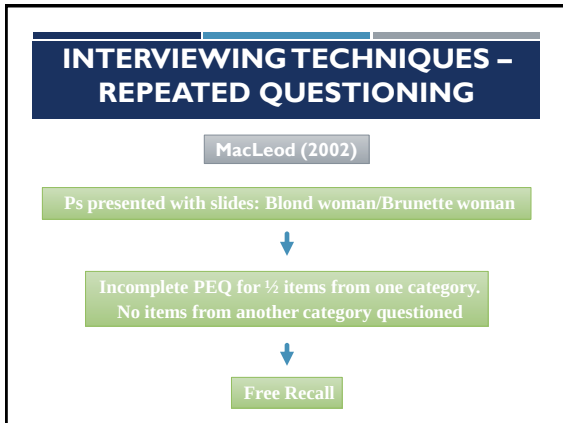


Free Recall

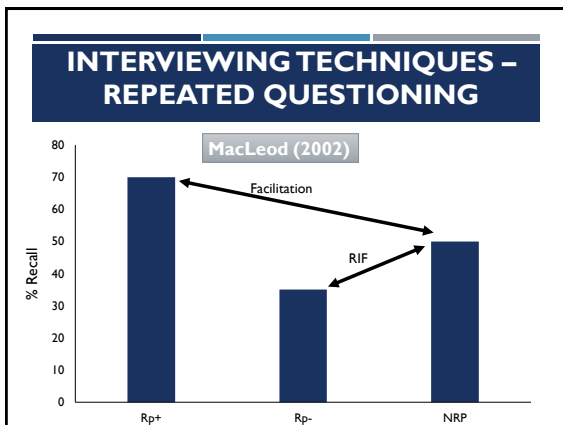
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THE STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

- Developed from lab work
- Based on what we know about LTM
 - Aims to find ways of asking questions that will essentially become retrieval cues
- Based on Tulving's Encoding specificity Principle:
 - Degree of overlap between trace and cue
 - Inappropriate cues = non-optimal retrieval
 - Many retrieval routes to a single memory trace
 - Employment of appropriate cue(s) will successfully retrieve target trace.

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THE STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

- Memory is made up of a network of associations rather than discrete and unconnected events
- This means memory can be accessed in a number of ways
- The cognitive interview exploits this by using multiple retrieval strategies

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THE STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

- Geiselman et al. (1985)/Fisher and Geiselman (1992)
- Four General components of the Cognitive Interview:
 1. Mental reinstatement of context of event
 2. Report every detail
 3. Recall event from different temporal orders
 4. Recall event from different viewpoints/perspectives

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THE STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

1. Mental reinstatement of context of event
 - Interviewer tries to reinstate the environmental and personal context of the event
 - Asks about the activities they did and feelings on the day
 - Asks about the scene – weather, time of day
 - Typically asks witnesses to use all five senses to recall the event
 - Aims to help recreate the event clearly in their mind, which may trigger the recall of context dependent memory
 - Aims to increase the number of cues to increase quality and quantity of retrieval routes to the memory trace

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THE STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

2. Report every detail
 - Even if they think it is not important, everything they can remember should be explained.
 - Apparent unimportant details to witness may be vital for the police
 - Also, unimportant details may themselves act as a cue and trigger the memory of critical information
 - Witnesses should have misconceptions they may have about memory explained.
 - They may withhold info if they do not feel confident about it, but they need to be heard

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THE STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

3. Recall event from different temporal orders
 - Describing events from the beginning to the end in chronological order is easy
 - Or when explaining information in temporal order any gaps may be filled in by what they expect would have happened between two timeframes
 - Going from the end back to the beginning takes up more cognitive resources, meaning they are less likely to be able to fill in gaps in memory.
 - Different temporal orders discourages the use of pre-event information and allows for retrieval of incidental and peripheral details

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THE STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

4. Recall event from different viewpoints/perspectives
 - Try to describe what they think other witnesses would have seen or what something may have looked like if they were in a different location/position
 - Could also be asked to recall the event from the viewpoint of the criminal
 - Is thought to encourage use of retrieval cues
 - However, could lead to witnesses becoming confused about their own memory

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THE STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

- Geiselman et al. (1985)
 - Investigated the effectiveness of the cognitive interview.
 - Participants viewed a film of a violent crime and, after 48 hours, were interviewed by a policeman using one of three methods:
 - the cognitive interview;
 - a standard interview used by the Los Angeles Police;
 - an interview using hypnosis.
 - Number of facts accurately recalled and number of errors made were recorded.

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THE STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

- Geiselman et al. (1985)
 - Average number of correctly recalled facts for the cognitive interview was 41.2, for hypnosis it was 38.0 and for the standard interview it was 29.4.
 - There was no significant difference in the number of errors in each condition.
 - Suggested the cognitive interview leads to better memory for events, with witnesses able to recall more relevant information compared with a traditional interview method.

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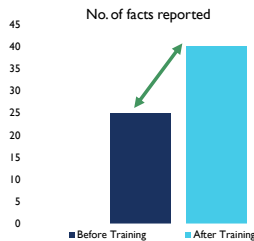
THE STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

- Increases % of info recalled to between 10-98%.
- Variance between studies based on a number of factors:
 - Level of cooperation between interviewer & EW
 - High = sig increase in success of CI
 - Level of emotional arousal of EW
 - High = sig decrease in success of CI
 - Redesigned CI to increase cooperation = Enhanced CI

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THE STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

- Enhanced CI in the Field: Fisher et al. (1989)



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THE GUIDED MEMORY INTERVIEW (GMI)

- Based on principles of context reinstatement
- Encourages EW to mentally reinstate environmental & emotional context of event to guide memory.
- Malpass & Devine (1981):
 - Ps witness act of vandalism
 - Ps view photo line-up 5 months later
 - Ps guided through GMI for each step of incident
 - Asked for full description & asked to visualise each sequence of events
 - Form image of suspect, describe appearance
 - Findings: recognition of suspects better than controls.

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STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

- Koehnken et al. (1994)
 - Build rapport
 - Witness allowed to give narrative description
 - Ample time given for witness to respond
 - Good with vulnerable witnesses, such as children or traumatised witnesses
 - Simple, unlikely to cause confusion
 - Is non-interruptive
 - Builds witness confidence
 - Uses active listening and open ended questions

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INTERVIEWING EYEWITNESSES

- So, can EW memory be improved through interviewing...
 - Techniques based on well-known Cognitive principles have some success
 - Better than no technique – but experience of interviewer helps.
 - Social factors sometimes underestimated
 - Vulnerable EW may not respond well with Cognitive technique.
 - Questioning can improve memory but underestimates negative consequence of incomplete repeated questioning (RIF).

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