

ECPS6005: COGNITION IN ACTION

INTERVIEWING EYEWITNESSES

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BRIEF BACKGROUND

- 1970s:
 - Police spent most shift time talking to public, but few had formal training.
 - Rand corporation (1975): aspects that solved a case were completeness and accuracy of EW report
 - Whatever police could get from EW

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MID 1980: 'STANDARD POLICE INTERVIEW'



- Interviewer driven
- Question-answer format
- Lots of interruptions
- Shift to narrative from EW
 - Specific Qs asked to clarify points/expand
 - Repeated questioning to test consistency
- Gives impression of standardisation but is not.
 - Based on experience of interviewer /common sense
 - Learnt as they went along/knowledge passed down

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INTERVIEWING WITNESSES



- Hillgard and Loftus (1979) – order of questioning is key:
 - EW should report incident in own words first
 - Reduces leading Qs or post-event info interference.
- But free recall may miss details police want to know.
 - Ask specific questions after.
- Suitability of repeated questioning is contentious
 - Tests consistency and strengthens memory (useful if long time between event and court case)
- However, cannot go over everything consistently
 - Items not being questioned are forgotten – sometimes more so than if no questioning 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 and Ps view slides:
8 sweatshirts / 8 textbooks

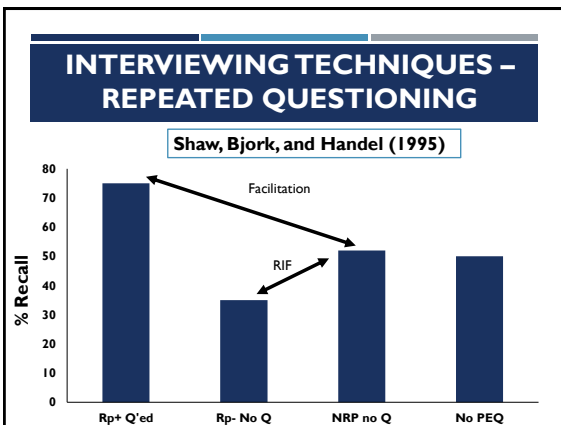
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Incomplete PEQ for ½ items from one category.
No items from another category questioned

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Free Recall

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INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES – REPEATED QUESTIONING

MacLeod (2002)

Ps presented with slides: Blond/Brunette woman

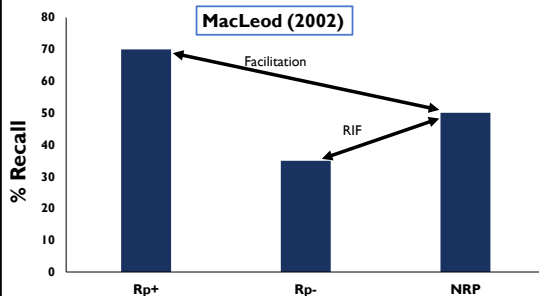
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Free Recall

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INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES – REPEATED QUESTIONING

MacLeod (2002)



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STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW



- Based on understanding of LTM
 - Find ways of asking questions that essentially become retrieval cues
- Tulving's Encoding Specificity Principle:
 - Overlap between trace and cue
 - Many retrieval routes to memory trace
 - Appropriate cue(s) successfully retrieve target trace.

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STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

- Geiselman et al. (1985)
- Fisher and Geiselman (1992)
- **Four General Components:**
 1. Mental reinstatement of context of event (use all 5 senses)
 2. Report every detail (no matter how trivial)
 3. Recall event from different temporal orders
 4. Recall event from different viewpoints/perspectives

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STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW



- Geiselman et al. (1985)
 - Ps viewed film of violent crime
 - Interviewed 48hrs later using one of three methods:
 - Standard Cognitive interview;
 - Standard interview used by Los Angeles Police;
 - Interview using hypnosis.
 - No. of facts accurately recalled, and no. of errors recorded.

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STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

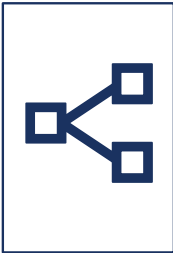
- Geiselman et al. (1985)

Interview Type	Average No. of correctly recalled facts
Standard Cognitive Interview	41.2
Standard Interview	29.4
Hypnosis	38.0

- No sig difference in no. of errors.
- Cognitive interview leads to better memory for events, with witnesses able to recall more relevant information.

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STANDARD COGNITIVE INTERVIEW



- Increases % of info recalled to between 10-98%.
- Variance between studies based on several factors:
 - Cooperation between interviewer & EW
 - High = sig increase in success of CI
 - Level of emotional arousal of EW
 - High = sig decrease in success of CI
 - Suggests social component involved

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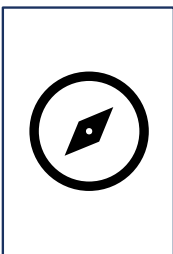
ENHANCED COGNITIVE INTERVIEW

- 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 environmental & emotional context
- Malpass & Devine (1981):
 - Ps witness act of vandalism
 - View photo line-up 5 months later
 - Guided through GMI for each step of incident
 - Asked to visualise sequence of events
 - Form image of suspect, describe appearance
- 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 (children or traumatised EWs)
 - Simple, unlikely to cause confusion
 - Non-interruptive
 - Builds witness confidence
 - Uses active listening and open-ended questions

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CAN EW MEMORY BE IMPROVED THROUGH INTERVIEWING?

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

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