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# **The Effect of Rapport in Forensic Interviewing**

**Roger Collins, Robyn Lincoln and Mark G. Frank**

The psychological literature suggests that establishing rapport between interviewer and subject — whether in clinical, experimental or forensic settings — is likely to enhance the quality of the interaction. Yet there are surprisingly few studies that test this assumption. This article reports a study of the effect of rapport on eyewitness recall of a dramatic videotaped event by creating three interviewer-attitude conditions — “rapport”, “neutral” and “abrupt”. Participants were randomly assigned to the three conditions, and recall was elicited by two methods — free narrative and a semi-structured questionnaire. The results indicate participants in the rapport interview recalled more correct information, and the same amount of incorrect information as participants in the other two conditions. However, prompting via the semi-structured questionnaire yielded additional correct as well as incorrect information for the neutral and abrupt conditions. The results are discussed for their relevance to interviews conducted in forensic settings, and to highlight the need for more specific and improved interview training for police and other justice personnel.

## **Forensic Interviewing**

Forensic interviewing is a burgeoning enterprise. Police, crime control agents (e.g., tax, customs, securities), lawyers, psychologists, other health professionals and private security personnel all conduct forensic interviews. Generally, however, the research literature concentrates on interviews performed by police with witnesses, victims or suspects (McMahon, 2000). Forensic interviews are merely aimed at obtaining a narrative of what was observed (Gudjonsson, 1992) which is a seemingly prosaic and achievable goal. Yet it can be an imprecise practice, as shown by the equivocal results in the research literature about the most appropriate strategy, the best outcome methods to utilise, and the characteristics of both interviewers and interviewees that elicit more useful information (Forrester, McMahon & Greenwood, 2001).

What is less equivocal is the critical role that forensic interviews play in criminal investigations (Sanders, 1986). Crime investigations require considerable interaction by operational police with members of the public (Swanton & Wilson, 1992). Obtaining information by way of “purposive conversations” comprises up to 80% of the duties of law enforcement personnel (Newberry, 1997) and, of course, the objective is to gather information that is as accurate and complete as possible in order for police to be as effective and efficient as possible (Gudjonsson, 1992). Witness accuracy and completeness are essential factors in determining if a case is solved or not (Fisher, McCauley and interviewees that elicit more useful information (Forrester, McMahon & Greenwood, 2001). What is less equivocal is the critical role that forensic interviews play in criminal investigations (Sanders, 1986). Crime investigations require considerable interaction by operational police with members of the public (Swanton & Wilson, 1992). Obtaining information by way of “purposive conversations” comprises up to 80% of the

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In addition, this information-gathering process may have evidential ramifications that affect subsequent forensic procedures (committal, trial, etc.). The reliability of the process is also important in avoiding miscarriages of justice, where it is estimated that perhaps 3,000 cases of criminal justice errors in the United States annually may be attributed to incorrect eyewitness testimony (Py, Ginet, Desperies & Cathey, 1997). Furthermore, greater efficiencies in crime clear-up rates would seem achievable if law enforcement personnel were properly trained in effective interviewing practices, thereby allowing for improved collection of witness information and enhanced investigative productivity (Grabosky, 1992; Wrightsman, Nietzel & Fortune, 1994).

Despite this acknowledged importance of the police interview, many police do not receive adequate training (Fisher, Chin & McCauley, 1990; Fisher et al., 1994; Lauchland & Le Brun, 1996). There is often little formal instruction, with officers learning their interview skills in the field, which may foster the use of erroneous methods and result in considerable loss of potentially valuable information (Fisher et al., 1990). This still occurs in Australia and other countries despite the wealth of extant psychological research on interview techniques.

Cooperative witnesses are the primary sources of information for police (Fisher et al., 1990). They are motivated by a desire to appear observant, to be correct and to avoid appearing foolish (Loftus, 1996). Therefore, they are inclined to provide answers but these may be a mixture of correct, incorrect or consciously fabricated information (Loftus, 1996), whether the product of suggestibility or not (Mazzoni, Loftus & Kirsch, 2001). Clearly, not all witnesses are cooperative, yet even when they are, their accounts may be incomplete and inaccurate (Zulawski & Wicklander, 1993). There are many reasons for such unreliable witness recall. Certainly in traumatic and unexpected events there is little time to observe, the observational conditions are usually less than ideal, the situational and interpersonal dynamics can be emotionally charged, and there are many competing stimuli (Geiselman, Fisher, Cohen, Holland & Surtes, 1986; Zulawski & Wicklander, 1993). Thus, witnesses who are likely to be under stress require sensitivity and awareness of their needs (Gudjonsson, 1992).

Despite these limiting pre-conditions, there are ways of maximising witness accuracy and completeness in the interview process (Geiselman & Fisher, 1989). Some of these variables include the status or approach used by the interviewer, prevailing conditions of the recall environment, and the type and wording of the questions asked (Baron & Byrne, 2000; Loftus, 1996). For example, the output method utilised (Marquis et al., 1972, cited in Loftus, 1996), such as free recall, controlled narrative or specific multiple-choice questions (Miller, 1993), can affect recall. Generally free recall is deemed the most accurate but least complete method; controlled narrative is less accurate but more

complete; and specific multiple-choice questions are evaluated as the least accurate but the most complete method (Loftus, 1996). In order to achieve both accuracy and completeness, it is recommended that interviews should initially involve a narrative free recall, followed by specific questioning (Loftus, 1996). However, police investigators tend to adopt a free recall type interview, frequently interrupted with specific questions but with the interviewer rarely straying from a rigid format. The consequences are that the interviewer often influences the recall, while the witness receives insufficient assistance in memory retrieval techniques (Py et al., 1997).

Most research aimed at improving both accuracy and completeness of witness recall has compared the effectiveness of the cognitive approach with standard interview techniques (Geiselman & Fisher, 1985; Fisher et al., 1994) or compared revised versions of the cognitive interview strategy with its earlier forms (Fisher, Geiselman, Raymond, Jurkevich & Lynn, 1987). The findings are somewhat inconsistent. For example, there are differences in recall outcomes dependent on the age of interviewees where the cognitive interview technique tends to advantage older people over younger ones (Mello & Fisher, 1996), although converse results have also been found (Fisher et al., 1987).

The cognitive technique, designed for cooperative witnesses, consists of specific memory-jogging methods (Fisher & McCauley, 1995). For example, the witness is asked to reconstruct the circumstances of the event in its totality; to narrate it from beginning to end or in reverse order or from the middle going both forwards and backwards; to change perspective, placing themselves in the position of another witness and reporting what that witness may have seen; and so on. In addition, there are further specific tools used to elicit information concerning physical appearance, names, numbers, speech characteristics, and conversation (Geiselman & Fisher, 1985). More recently an enhanced cognitive interviewing strategy has been developed "to improve both memory retrieval and dyadic communication in an interview with a witness" (McMahon, 2000, p. 12).

By comparison, the standard police interview technique, involves a narrative report of what happened, followed by a question and answer format intended to enhance the completeness of the report (Geiselman & Fisher, 1985). There are a number of criticisms of this method including: the potential for loss of concentration by the witness; restricting the responses to only the specific questions asked; and the inclusion of suggestive, non-neutral or technical terminology (Py et al., 1997). However, it should be pointed out that the standard interview technique is uniformly adopted by most law enforcement services in Australia.

Other research has focussed on the influences of interpersonal variables. For example, subjects interviewed by higher status individuals, such as a senior police officer in uniform, produce longer recall reports although there is not necessarily a corresponding increase in accuracy and completeness (Loftus, 1996). Moreover, research shows that the interviewing officer's attitude at the first point of contact with the victim or witness is crucial to the information-gathering process, the likely success of the investigation, and more generally to more effective law enforcement through intelligence gathering (Geiselman & Fisher, 1989; Grabosky, 1992). However, this corpus of psychological

research has generally failed to examine the relationship between interviewer and interviewee and the role of rapport and other interpersonal variables in enhancing recall and in generating successful interviews.

### **Rapport and Interviewing**

A key assumption for interviews is that a relaxed and comfortable witness will be more compliant and cooperative (Geiselman et al., 1984) and will therefore try harder to exhaust their recall. This is why it is recommended that interviews be conducted in pleasant surroundings (Geiselman et al., 1984; Leonard, 1971 cited in Loftus, 1996), even though the empirical studies show that relaxed and motivated participants can still produce information that is both incomplete and unreliable (Loftus, 1996). Yet, determining the conditions under which witnesses may be relaxed and comfortable and more likely to yield more accurate information remains problematic. As noted above, some suggest that it is the structure or nature of the interview process (as in the cognitive interview style) that is pivotal; others endorse features of the physical setting or environment as crucial elements; while others focus more on interpersonal variables such as power and coercion (as noted in the study on status described above) or the relationship between interviewer and interviewee.

Many studies nevertheless begin with the premise of the necessity for establishing rapport to facilitate a “productive interpersonal climate” (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1990, p. 110; Olsen & Wells, 1991). The importance of rapport is found in the assumption that if both parties to the interview “get along”, then the interview will be more “successful” (Minichiello et al., 1990). With rapport the interviewee is more likely to cooperate with someone with whom they feel comfortable, and who is supportive rather than one who is uncooperative and distant (Zulawski & Wicklander, 1993). Yet even though rapport is considered a vital component in successful interviews, it is not clear what constitutes rapport, for it is more than just being friendly or supportive, and the literature seems to be devoid of a “specific method to create or guarantee rapport” (Minichiello et al., 1990, p. 110).

Rapport nevertheless can be defined as a “harmonious, empathetic, or sympathetic relation or connection to another self” and an “accord or affinity, in an ecological alignment with another system” (Newberry & Stubbs, 1990, p. 14). A successful interview, governed by and dependent upon establishing rapport, is likened to an informal conversation, with the interviewer listening and responding in a curious manner as the basis for subsequent questions (Keats, 1993; Metzler, 1989). Rapport-building establishes harmony in the interview, leads to free discussion and creates a willingness in the mind of the interviewee (Buckwalter, 1983), and therefore is deemed the most important element in the person-to-person communication process (Newberry & Stubbs, 1990).

Although there are few studies that specifically address rapport, those that do exist have produced equivocal results (Geiselman, Saywitz & Bornstein, 1998). One such study analysed the deaths of 51 law enforcement officers “killed in the line of duty”. In this case it was considered imperative that investigators establish rapport to facilitate a

positive mood in the offenders interviewed who had nothing to gain by being cooperative (Pinizzotto & Davis, 1996). This study demonstrates that the development of rapport — in combination with specific interview techniques — results in more detailed information being obtained (Pinizzotto & Davis, 1996). However, this study was not a controlled one and therefore other plausible factors besides rapport could not be ruled out in producing the results.

Another study hypothesised that a supportive interviewer who is “warm and accepting” will have a positive effect on the interviewee, resulting in more complete and accurate recall than an interviewer who questions or challenges the recall (Marquis et al., 1972, cited in Loftus, 1996). However, the study failed to support the hypothesis, for even though subjects exposed to reinforcement felt more positive about the interview, this did not translate to increased completeness or accuracy of their recall.

Similarly, some studies have tested familiarity as a measure of rapport where for example, children are interviewed by a parent versus an unfamiliar adult. Again the results are not supportive of the general hypothesis for the unfamiliar interviewers elicited more accurate information than the parent interviewers (Ricci, Beal & Dekle, 1996). In addition, an early “race effects” study dealt with the issue of rapport through “intelligence testing” of children where the race of the examiner was the same or different (African- American or not) to that of the subjects. Although the results failed to show a strong effect for rapport, there were observed differences in “IQ scores” depending upon the race of the examiner (Canady, 1936, cited in Morawski, 1997).

While rapport is generally accepted as a critical element in interpersonal communication, it is more easily established with some people than others. For example, those from a similar background, profession or interest can have a natural rapport resulting from an understanding or likeness of that person. This could be described as a commonality of type, which facilitates trust and allows for the establishment of rapport (Newberry & Stubbs, 1990). This is where the status (perceived or otherwise) of the interviewer may have an effect. However, there are also verbal and non-verbal behaviours, adjustments to the interview environment and other factors that are recommended for the establishment of rapport.

## **Overview**

The deficiencies in the literature concerning the effect of rapport in forensic interviews provide the impetus for the present study. This previous work has proposed an effect for rapport on eyewitness recall, but has not tested it in a controlled experimental setting. The general hypothesis is that rapport-building by the interviewer will enhance witnesses’ recall when measured against other nonrapport modes. The study tests differences across three interviewer-attitude conditions — “rapport”, “neutral” and “abrupt” — that are developed from the initial contact and maintained throughout the formal interview phase, until the concluding debriefing session. It is hypothesised that rapportbuilding has a positive influence on memory retrieval when utilising free narrative and semistructured

recall modes, and that this enhancement of recall affects both the quality and quantity of information elicited, measured by comparing both accurate and inaccurate details.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants were 45 university student volunteers drawn from first year to postgraduate classes in communication skills, psychology, and law from Bond University. Three volunteers failed to attend as scheduled and were clearly not included, which left a final sample of 42. The subjects were randomly assigned to the rapport group (six males and eight females aged from 17 to 60 years,  $M = 29.9$  years); neutral group (four males and 10 females aged from 18 to 37 years,  $M = 23.6$  years); and the abrupt group (four males and 10 females aged from 18 to 53 years,  $M = 25.4$  years).

### **Procedure**

All participants arrived at the same purpose-built clinical interview room for the experiment. The interviewing mode commenced upon arrival. All aspects of the background environment remained constant across the three experimental conditions, with the exception of the manipulations designed to effect rapport (see below). The same interviewer (the senior author) conducted all interviews. Participants were seated comfortably and instructed to pay attention to a video monitor, and told that after viewing the videotape they would then have a conversation with the interviewer about what they had just seen.

Participants viewed a 66-second colour videotape of a real-life stimulus event. The video shows a burning motor vehicle in a field and a male bystander watching from the side. This man suddenly runs and dives into the burning vehicle. There is an excited verbal interchange from offscreen bystanders, a fire truck arrives and further agitated conversations from off-screen bystanders ensue. The event is visually uncluttered and short but is demonstrably emotionally charged. After viewing the videotape, participants were interviewed, during which they produced a free written narrative of what they had seen. Interviews were conducted without haste, interference or possible suggestibility, which sometimes accompanies the police interview and can pressure eyewitnesses to search their memory for recall whilst listening or answering other questions (Mello & Fisher, 1996). There were no time restrictions, so the interview was deemed complete when the participant, after an opportunity to recall additional information, indicated that they had finished. They were then presented with a structured questionnaire that served as a cued recall. They were then asked to comment on the interviewer, as a check on the success of the rapport manipulation. A debriefing followed, during which time any potential issues arising from the video content, or the interviewer's behaviour, were addressed.

Although available research clearly indicates the superiority of the cognitive interview over the standard interview, the current research deliberately incorporated the

standardised written interview technique. The purpose in obtaining a written narrative was twofold: firstly it provides a written data source for analysis without the need for further transcription; and secondly it provides an approximation of processes likely to be in current use by Australian law enforcement personnel in statement collection.

### *Rapport Manipulation*

Specific scripts were devised for each of the three conditions. Each condition featured a different voice modulation, dialogue, body language, personalisation and name usage, as well as the placement of furniture and the use of props. For example, in the rapport mode, a hardcover diary was discretely placed on the floor ensuring it was neither a distraction nor a barrier; whereas during the abrupt and neutral modes, it was dropped noisily onto the table or used as a barrier between the interviewer and the participant. Moreover, in the rapport mode the interviewer spoke with a gentler tone, referred to the participant by name, adopted a more relaxed body posture, and was generally friendlier. In contrast, in the abrupt mode the interviewer spoke with a staccato harsher tone, did not refer to the participant by name, maintained a stiff body posture, and was generally uninterested in anything but conducting the experiment. In the neutral condition, the interviewer was as neutral in all behavioural channels (i.e., voice tone, body posture, etc.) as possible. The effectiveness of these manipulations was assessed by asking participants to comment on the interviewer at the end of the experiment.

### *Measures*

The first outcome measure comprised a free recall of the stimulus event. Subjects were asked to provide in their own words, as much detail as they could of the video content. Participants were then requested to complete the second outcome measure that comprised a semi-structured questionnaire containing a combination of forced choice and open-ended questions. These included: where the event occurred; the weather conditions; number and sex of people visible; their clothing and appearance; their physical behaviour; the date, number and type of vehicles depicted; vehicle registration numbers; and verbal content. A final measure comprised subjects' feedback about the interviewer-attitude mode.

There were potentially 96 correct elements of information contained in the video. Subject responses were scored as correct or incorrect to yield a set of scores for each subject, namely correct and incorrect responses (from the written account); additional correct and incorrect responses (from the semi-structured questionnaire); accuracy rate (total of correct responses); interview duration in minutes; and total word count for the free narrative.

### *Design*

The main independent variable of interest was the interviewing condition -rapport, neutral or abrupt. The dependent variables included the number of information bits freely recalled correctly, the number of information bits freely recalled incorrectly, the number

of information bits recalled correctly when prompted with the questionnaire, and the number of bits recalled incorrectly when prompted with the questionnaire. The number of words used was also measured as was the time spent on the free recall portion.

## **Results**

### ***Manipulation Check***

The participants provided one-sentence accounts of their relationship with the interviewer, which were used to assess the success of the rapport manipulation. These sentences were transcribed, and then presented in random order to a coder who classified them into one of five interval categories that generated a metric of rapport. These interval categories and their value were: (1) definitely had no rapport; (2) probably had no rapport; (3) neutral or unclassified response; (4) probably had rapport; and (5) definitely had rapport. A second coder agreed on the classification of 26 of the 28 accounts (93% agreement) and the two disagreements were only one category apart. These scores were then averaged within each of the three conditions. A one-way ANOVA showed, as predicted, that the rapport manipulation was successful such that the participants' mean rapport score in the rapport condition was significantly higher than the other two conditions  $F(2, 39) = 49.3; p < .001; M's = 4.50$  for rapport, 2.36 for neutral, and 1.71 for abrupt. Follow up tests showed that it was rapport that differed significantly from the other two conditions, as neutral and abrupt did not differ significantly from each other.

### ***Main Analyses***

The number of correct and incorrect bits of information produced from the free recall interview and then the cued recall questionnaire were tabulated. The results for the free recall are presented in Table 1. As predicted, a one-way ANOVA showed that participants in the rapport condition recalled more correct bits of information than participants in the neutral or the abrupt conditions  $F(2, 39) = 11.8, p < .001$ . Follow up LSD tests showed that it was the rapport condition ( $M = 29.43$ ) that differed significantly from the neutral ( $M = 18.64$ ) and the abrupt conditions ( $M = 18.50$ ); the neutral and abrupt means did not differ significantly from each other.

The results for the incorrect bits of information do not show the same pattern. No significant differences were found between the three conditions for the amount of incorrect information recalled  $F(2, 39) < 1, p = ns$ . The correct and incorrect bits of information derived from the cued recall questionnaire were tabulated (see Table 2). This technique produced no significant differences between conditions in terms of the amount of correct information recalled  $F(2, 39) < 1, p = ns$ , and the amount of incorrect information recalled  $F(2, 39) = 2.0, p = ns$ .

Because the participants had just been interviewed and their freely recalled information was elicited moments earlier, we were interested in the amount of new correct and new incorrect information generated by this cued recall questionnaire (see Table 2). A one-way ANOVA found that the neutral and abrupt conditions produced more new correct

information than the rapport condition  $F(2, 39) = 8.3, p < .001$ . Follow up LSD tests showed that the neutral ( $M = 8.64$ ) and abrupt ( $M = 9.00$ ) differed from rapport ( $M = 4.79$ ), but not from each other.

A different pattern emerged when the number of new incorrect bits of information derived from the cued recall questionnaire was examined. In this case, a one-way ANOVA showed that the rapport condition produced significantly less new incorrect bits ( $M = 1.29$ ), compared to the neutral ( $M = 2.40$ ) and abrupt conditions  $M = 3.00; F(2, 39) = 3.8, p < .05$ . Follow up LSD tests showed that the rapport condition had generated significantly less incorrect bits of information than the abrupt condition, and the neutral condition did not differ from rapport or abrupt.

Taken across both the free recall and the questionnaire, 91% of the information provided in the rapport condition was accurate, compared to 86% in the neutral, and 84% in the abrupt. A one-way ANOVA based upon the total correct bits across both techniques, minus the total incorrect bits across both techniques, showed a significant net accuracy for rapport compared to the other two conditions  $F(2, 39) = 6.2, p < .005$ ; LSD follow-up showed no difference between neutral and abrupt conditions.

Table 1

The Number of Correct and Incorrect Bits of Information Freely Recalled, by Interview Condition

MEASURE	CONDITION		
	RAPPORT	NEUTRAL	ABRUPT
Correct bits of information	29.75 <sup>a</sup>	36.75 <sup>a</sup>	18.90 <sup>a</sup>
Incorrect bits of information	2.2	1.97	2.2

Note: a = 1 participant from each with different age groups with this score (this by ANOVA test = 0)

Table 2

The Number of Correct and Incorrect Bits of Information Provided via the Cued Recall Questionnaire, by Interview Condition

MEASURE	CONDITION		
	RAPPORT	NEUTRAL	ABRUPT
Correct bits of information	21.4	3.75	0.71
Incorrect bits of information	2.04	1.96	1.94
New incorrect bits of information	1.29 <sup>a</sup>	2.40 <sup>a</sup>	3.00 <sup>a</sup>
New correct bits of information	1.29	2.40 <sup>a</sup>	3.00 <sup>a</sup>

Note: a = 1 participant from each with different age groups with this score (this by ANOVA test = 0)

## Subsidiary Analyses

It seems clear from the analyses that participants in the rapport condition provided better quantity and quality of information compared to the other two conditions. This did not seem to be a function of an interaction of sex of participant on the results  $F(1, 36) < 1, p = ns$ . A similar pattern of nonsignificance was found for the relationship between the age

of the participants and any accuracy or inaccuracy measure, or between age and time spent talking or words used (all Spearman correlations  $< +/- .28$ ,  $p = ns$ ).

The amount of time the participant spent in the free recall interview was examined, as well as the number of words they generated in the process, as this could have been a moderating factor in generating the additional correct information. A one-way ANOVA, where the means were transformed via natural logs to meet the assumption of normality, found that participants in the rapport condition spent significantly more time with the interviewer ( $M = 28.36$  mins) compared to either the neutral ( $M = 16.36$  mins) or abrupt conditions,  $M = 15.21$  mins;  $F(2, 39) = 19.7$ ,  $p < .001$ . A one-way ANOVA, again using the natural log transformations, found that the participants used more words in the rapport condition ( $M = 224.6$ ), compared to either the neutral ( $M = 112.4$ ) or abrupt conditions  $M = 81.8$ ;  $F(2, 39) = 14.8$ ;  $p < .001$ .

## **Discussion**

The results show quite clearly that participants did see the interviewer as having more rapport with them in the rapport condition than in the other two conditions. Moreover, when the interviewer built rapport, participants provided more correct bits of information without a corresponding increase in incorrect bits of information. These seemed to happen independent of age and sex of the participants. The lack of sex differences perhaps reflects the contradictions on male–female differences found in the research literature. Some studies (Ellis et al., 1973; Lipton, 1977; Witryol & Kaess, 1957, all cited in Loftus, 1996), found females are better eyewitnesses than males; others show males are better than females (Clifford & Scott, 1978; Trankell, 1972, cited in Loftus, 1996); while others report no differences in the accuracy of males and females (McKelvie, 1976; Bird, 1927, cited in Loftus, 1996). The study did have a strong cross-section of age; this is important because previous studies have found that while some memory functions such as that for details may decline with age, other cognitive skills are maintained (Loftus, 1996; McMahan, 2000). However, age did not affect our results.

When given a directed interview via the cued recall questionnaire, participants in the neutral and abrupt conditions were able to produce more new correct bits of information than the rapport condition participants. This apparent contradiction is most likely to result because the rapport participants obtained greater accuracy and completeness by initially exhausting their recall in the free narrative stage. It also suggests that these participants did attend to the video, and were not fully distracted. This appears to contradict previous studies (Lipton, 1977; Marquis et al., 1972, cited in Loftus, 1996) which found that narrative or free recall was more accurate, but contained less quantity than a controlled narrative as approximated by the structured questionnaire. However, our result may be confounded because the short length of our cued recall questionnaire clearly elicited less information overall.

The ramifications of this study are that the interviewer who adopts a rapport-building approach with an interviewee creates the potential to substantially increase correct responses without a corresponding increase in incorrect responses. Notably, the rapport

participants will stay with the interviewer longer, and will more thoroughly search their memories for correct information to assist the interviewer. This notion is further supported when we examined participants' selfreport of rapport with the interviewer. In the rapport condition, nine participants specifically mentioned the fact that the interviewer's "friendly and supportive" attitude made them "try harder" in the interview and in recalling additional detail. By contrast, nine participants mentioned that they were "reluctant to assist" because of the interviewer's attitude in the neutral and abrupt modes.

These results suggest that interviewer attitude can seriously affect the quality and quantity of information provided. In essence, a lack of rapport has the potential to turn a cooperative witness into an uncooperative one — not in all cases but in at least one-third of participants in this research project who were subject to the neutral or abrupt interviewer attitude. The results also suggest, with respect to trying to define rapport, that a number of participants in this research project appraised the neutral condition as being "rude" or "abrupt", showing that for some people, even disinterest or a lack of enthusiasm can be interpreted as a highly negative interviewer attitude, which in turn is likely to affect the outcome of the interview.

This raises the question of what would happen if this experiment were to be replicated with uncooperative witnesses. For example, it is not clear whether building rapport will make witnesses more or less likely to cooperate; nor whether rapport will make them more or less likely to lie to an investigator. Moreover, if interviewees do choose to lie, it is not known whether there will be any behavioural clues that may betray their deception under rapport, compared to non-rapport conditions (cf. Frank & Ekman, 1997). Likewise, it is uncertain what effect rapport-building would have on suspect interviews, compared to the witness interview situation examined here. Future research will have to address these issues.

These results are subject to criticism by arguing that this rapport-building technique is not time effective in terms of the amount of correct information per minute, as participants spent at least twice as much time with the interviewer in the rapport condition compared to other conditions. However, it would be erroneous to conclude this. What is important to any investigation is maximising the amount of correct information from a witness, while minimising the amount of incorrect information. It might be a different situation if both accurate and inaccurate information increased with time spent with the interviewer, but our results show only an increase in correct information, and no corresponding increase of incorrect information. Thus differences in the amount of time it took to produce this correct information should not be a significant factor in any competent investigation. In fact, this type of outcome is exactly what most interviewers aspire to in their investigations (Newberry, 1997).

Finally, it should be noted that even in the rapport mode, participants still provided about one-third of the available correct information, lending weight to the incomplete nature of eyewitness reports in general. However, because this was an artificial eyewitness situation, we may not ever be able to discern how these results would differ from real-life eyewitness situations, where witnesses see, hear, smell, taste and just simply experience

in more detail all the information that occurs (Malpass & Devine, 1980, cited in Geiselman & Fisher, 1989).

### ***Conclusion***

Contemporary law enforcement administrators seeking effective interviewing techniques should consider this rapport aspect of interpersonal communication in their recruit interview training. As noted earlier, police training in interviewing does seem inadequate especially when measured against the importance of witness intelligence and the amount of time investigators devote to interviews. It is likewise important to recognise the range of non-law enforcement personnel who are required to conduct forensic interviews, so the need for enhanced training should not be restricted to police. It seems clear that rapportbuilding is a simple yet cost-effective method of increasing accurate information available to investigators in their search for evidence. In this present study, only five minutes were allocated for rapport-building, and yet it had a very powerful effect on the accuracy of recall. There remains however a need to further refine its operationalisation, and to test the effects in other situations facing forensic interviewers.

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