

## **The Scharff technique:**

### **Examining the effectiveness of confirmation/disconfirmation claims on masking the interest of specific pieces of information.**

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#### **Abstract**

The Scharff-technique is used to elicit information and consists of five different but interrelated tactics. The confirmation/disconfirmation (claim) tactic will be further investigated in this study. Contrary to previous research on the Scharff technique, this study will focus on the quality of information (specific pieces of information). This study is on how the interviewer can best mask his interest in a specific piece of information using the claim tactic of the Scharff technique. More specifically, this study investigated the possible effects of different positions of incorrect (D=disconfirmation) and correct (C=confirmation) claims to which could best mask the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information. Participants (N= 307) were asked to take part in an interview and take on the role of "source". Participants received background information about a planned terrorist attack and were asked to not reveal too much or too little information. Participants were randomly divided into one of five interview conditions: (1) the C-C-C condition, (2) the D-C-C condition, (3) the C-D-C condition, (4) the C-C-D condition or the (5) Direct Approach condition. As predicted, participants interviewed with the Scharff conditions perceived the interviewer to hold more knowledge prior to the interview (vs. the Direct Approach). Additionally, participants in the DCC condition had a more difficult time understanding what information the interviewer was interested in (vs. CCC condition and vs. the Direct Approach). Unexpectedly, the different orders of the claims did not affect masking the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information.

Hanns Scharff was a master interrogator at the Luftwaffe Intelligence and Evaluation Centre (*Auswertestelle West*) in Germany who interrogated allied fighter pilots. Scharff was very successful in influencing his prisoners to give him the intelligence he was after. This happened often without the prisoners understanding that they were revealing pieces of vital information to the enemy intelligence centre. One American POW stated the following: "I suppose he got something out of me, but to this day I haven't the least idea what it could have been" (Toliver, 1997). Reflecting on how well Scharff could keep his interest in information hidden.

Human intelligence (HUMINT) gathering is best described as the gathering of intelligence by means of an interaction between two or more individuals (Justice, Bhatt, Brandon, & Kleinman, 2010 as in Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos, 2014). A HUMINT interrogation is conducted to acquire reliable information about the past, present, or future which can be beneficial for national security or national interests (Evans, Meissner, Brandon, Russano, & Kleinman, 2010). Information elicitation is a characteristic of human

intelligence (HUMINT) gathering. The goal of information elicitation is to gather information in such a manner that the source underestimates his or her contribution of new information and remains unaware of the interviewer's information objectives (Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Kleinman, 2014).

Hanns Scharff developed his own type of method for gathering HUMINT, this technique came to be called: the Scharff technique. Scharff deployed this technique during WWII. Scharff developed this HUMINT gathering technique regarding the anticipation of the interviewee's behaviour (Oleszkiewicz, et al., 2014a) and Scharff did this through looking through the perspective of the source (Granhag, Oleszkiewicz, Strömwall, & Kleinman, 2015). The Scharff technique has been the topic in scientific research since 2013 (Granhag, Montecinos, & Oleszkiewicz, 2013) and this paper will contribute in trying to further examine the Scharff technique, more specially how the interviewer can best mask his interest in a piece of information using the claim tactic. The different tactics of the Scharff technique will be explained next.

### **The Scharff technique**

Scharff used perspective taking by putting himself in the source's position and this way identified counterinterrogation strategies that his prisoners adopted in order to withstand the interrogation (Granhag, et al., 2015). Scharff identified three such counterinterrogation strategies: (i) "I will not tell very much during the interrogation"; (ii) "I will try to figure out what they are after, and then make sure not to give them what they want"; and (iii) "It is meaningless to withhold or deny what they already know." (Oleszkiewicz, et al., 2014a).

To counter the counterinterrogation strategies, Scharff made use of five different but interrelated tactics. The first tactic is *the friendly approach*. Scharff was known for his friendly and conversational way of approaching American and British sources. He would build rapport and trust with the source. Generating trust can be done by the display of positive traits such as ability (e.g., understanding the source and topic), benevolence (e.g., wanting to help the source), and integrity (e.g., being honest about rights and regulations) (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Rapport-based tactics do not coerce the source into complying but simply make sure there is a chance for open communication (Alison, Alison, Noone, Elntib, & Christiansen, 2013). Rapport can increase the amount of cooperation and information the source may provide (Abbe & Brandon, 2014). The second tactic is *not pressing for information*. Scharff did not explicitly ask questions, but told detailed stories and encouraged his sources to add or correct information. The third tactic is *the illusion of*

*knowing it all*. Scharff created such an illusion by telling a detailed story what made it very clear he was well informed on the topic. Additionally, Scharff made sure that the source knew that it was unlikely he/she was able to contribute any new information beyond what Scharff already knew (Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos, 2014). He achieved this by stating to the source that this detailed story is only some of the information he holds. The illusion of knowing it all is created for two main reasons. The first reason is that if the source would like to be perceived as even minimally cooperative, the source would have to tell information beyond the story that the interviewer has told. The second reason is that the source might presume that the interviewer holds more information than the interviewer just told. That is, the illusion of knowing it all tactic may result in two specific effects. A source may (a) misperceive what pieces of information the interviewer holds, and (b) reveal information that is new (i.e., previously unknown) to the interviewer although they did not intend to advance the interviewer's knowledge (Granhag, et al., 2015). The fourth tactic is *the confirmation/disconfirmation (claim) tactic*. As mentioned before, Scharff did not ask direct question. Instead he worked with confirmations and disconfirmations by presenting claims to the source, that the interviewer either want the source to confirm or disconfirm. When presenting these claims this way Scharff could extract information from the source without revealing his information objectives (Oleszkiewicz, et al., 2014b). An example of the confirmation/disconfirmation tactic could be 'we already have information telling us that the bomb will be set off near the end of October'. So, the source can respond by either confirming or disconfirming this claim. The source might be more willing to respond to claims than to direct questions, as it demands a less active form of communication and complicity. Sometimes new information can be extracted even when the source barely responds (e.g., only a yes or no). As Oleszkiewicz, et al., (2014b) further specify, from the perspective of the source, confirming a claim might be viewed as "I only confirmed what they already knew," and disconfirming might be viewed as "I only told them they were off target". The fifth tactic is to *ignore new information*. When a source would present new information, the interviewer should treat the information as not significant. The purpose of this tactic is to hide that the revealed information by the source was of interest to the interviewer. This way the source stays unaware of their contribution and it also helps mask the interviewer's information objective.

In sum, Scharff developed his own interrogation strategy, with perspective taking having an important foundation within the Scharff-technique. Scharff developed a set of tactics within his interrogation strategy where 'the illusion of knowing it all' is one of the

recognisable ones, where he convinced his prisoner that he already held all the most important information (Oleszkiewicz, et al., 2014a; Granhag, et al., 2015).

### **Previous research on the Scharff technique**

Since 2013 research has been conducted on the Scharff technique. A crucial finding when formulating the Scharff technique was that it became clear that the illusion-of-knowing-it-all tactic should be introduced first, before presenting claims (Granhag, et al., 2015). Subsequent studies have a consistent composition in the experimental set-up, with some studies that differ in the details. The Scharff technique has commonly been compared to the Direct Approach (direct, open-ended and explicit questions). In previous research on the Scharff technique participants received background information about an upcoming attack. The participants were asked to imagine that they want to help the police but also have sympathy for the group's cause and members. Thus, the participant should manage the dilemma of not sharing too much information nor too little information during the upcoming interview. With the Scharff technique the interview will start with the interviewer introducing the illusion-of-knowing-it-all tactic, by telling a detailed and credible story. Providing an illusion that the interviewer is more knowledgeable than he actually is. Afterwards, the claims will be stated. When implementing the Direct Approach, the illusion-of-knowing-it-all will not be introduced, the questions will be asked straight after the participant has read all of the received information.

This previous research on the Scharff technique has shown four consistent findings; (1) the Scharff technique elicits more new information than the Direct Approach; (2) sources interviewed with the Scharff technique have a comparatively more difficult time reading the interviewer's information objectives; (3) sources interviewed with the Scharff technique underestimate their amount of new information revealed, whereas sources interviewed with the Direct Approach overestimate their amount of new information revealed; and (4) sources interviewed with the Scharff technique believe the interviewer to hold comparatively more knowledge prior to the interview (May, Granhag, Oleszkiewicz, 2014; Oleszkiewicz et al., 2014a; Oleszkiewicz et al., 2014b; Granhag, Oleszkiewicz, Strömwall, & Kleinman, 2015; May & Granhag, 2016; Oleszkiewicz, 2016; Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Kleinman, 2017).

The study of May, et al. (2014) is of particular relevance for the current study. They conducted research within three techniques for eliciting intelligence from human sources. Two versions of the Scharff-technique, with one condition only presenting correct claims (confirmations) and one condition only presenting incorrect claims (disconfirmations), were

compared against the Direct Approach. Participants participated through a phone interview. Each interview had the following set-up: an initial open-ended question, claims/direct questions, and a final open-ended question. The Scharff confirmation condition and the Scharff disconfirmation condition only differed using the tactic of a confirmation or a disconfirmation. Results show that both Scharff conditions resulted in more new information and underestimation of contribution of new information than the Direct Approach (no differences between the Scharff conditions). But the interviewer's information objectives were better masked with the confirmation-tactic than with the disconfirmation-tactic. In conclusion, the confirmation-tactic is more effective when aiming to elicit sensitive information because the real purpose of the information exchange stays more hidden. Furthermore, participants in the confirmation condition perceived the interviewer held more information than the interviewer actually did, compared with the Scharff disconfirmation condition (and the Direct Approach).

Additionally, the study of May and Granhag (2016) is of specific interest for the current study due to the examination of different claim effects within the Scharff technique. The set-up consisted of a phone interview. Two versions of the Scharff technique were compared against the Direct Approach. The Scharff conditions were constructed into four tactics. The difference lay within the position of the confirmation tactic. One version of the Scharff technique contained: Illusion of knowing it all tactic; Open-ended question; Confirmation tactic; Open-ended question. The other version of the Scharff technique contained: Illusion of knowing it all tactic; Confirmation tactic; Open-ended question; Open-ended question. On all important measures the Scharff technique performed better than the Direct Approach. Within the two order effects of the Scharff technique there were no significant differences found. The authors assumed this was because the illusion of knowing it all was established first in both versions.

The highlighted studies of May, et al. (2014) and May and Granhag (2016) researched the confirmation tactic and disconfirmation tactic separate. Oleszkiewicz et al., (2014b) argue that a mix of claims with both confirmations and disconfirmations may also distract the true piece of information the interviewer is after. Thus, the current study will research if it is better to use a mix of claims, and what the best mixed order of claims will be to best hide the interviewer information objectives. Another difference within the two presented studies and the current study is that these two presented studies looked at the overall interview, quantity of information, and the current study will look at a specific piece of information, quality of information.

## **Quantity vs. Quality**

As mentioned above, where previous research of the Scharff technique focused on masking the general interest of the interviewer (quantity of information). This study will focus on the quality rather than quantity, thus how to mask the interest in a *specific* piece of information (e.g. location of the attack). This will be researched through using different orders of confirmations and disconfirmations. When the interviewer is successful in masking the interest in a piece of information the source may be unaware at the contribution he is making and this may result in new and trustful information.

## **Primacy and recency effects**

Primacy and recency effects occur when a person recalls the items best at the beginning and the final position of the list (Tzeng, 1973). Recency effects reflect the output of short-term memory and primacy effects reflect the output of long-term memory. Meaning that the last items from a list tend to be recalled first and the first items from the list will be remembered later. Although, recency effect will be compromised when a distractor takes place what exceeds the holding time of short-term memory, 15-30 sec or more (Bjork, Whitten, 1974). This means that after the interrogation the source may think back at the conversation and remember the start and end of this conversation more clearly compared to the middle. The source may relate this to the interview objectives he/she thinks the interviewer was interested in.

## **Distraction**

Here it is assumed that a mix of claims can better hide the information objectives from the interviewer (in a specific piece of information) compared to an order of claims with only confirmations (confirmation tactic). This is believed due to the presence of an incorrect alternative (disconfirmation) in the mixed claims tactic. An incorrect alternative may attract attention in the presented claims, because it is believed this may cause some type of distraction. This distraction may be evoked because the source could have expected to confirm a correct alternative (as the interviewer has demonstrated himself as knowledgeable), but is instead placed in a position that requires him or her to reject (i.e., disconfirm) information that is incorrect. Additionally, it gives the source a unique chance to contribute and this may also attract attention. Thus, by presenting the incorrect alternative the interviewer may draw the source's attention away from correct claims. This distraction may influence the source's perception of which piece of information the interviewer is really interested in.

## The present study

The objective of this study is to examine the claim tactic from the Scharff technique with regard to masking the interest of a specific piece of information. Four different claim tactics will be used; (1) Following an incorrect alternative; (2) Preceding an incorrect alternative – Type I; (3) Preceding an incorrect alternative – Type II; (4) the confirmation only tactic (these four claim tactics are explained below). Because of its extensive use in practice and being a common comparison technique when examining the Scharff technique, the effectiveness of the Direct Approach will be compared against the effectiveness of the Scharff technique. This study was administered online, thus the participants did not interact face-to-face with the interviewer, instead they received information and answered questions behind their computer. A part of the interview was pre-recorded and played to the participants during the experiment.

### Set-up claims tactic

Within the mixed claims tactic of this experiment the piece of information the interviewer is interested in will be stated as a C (correct claim/confirmation) and not as a D (incorrect claim/disconfirmation), because of the possible distractive nature of the D. Within each order there will be one disconfirmation, and remaining will be two confirmations. Within each order one of these remaining confirmations will be chosen which is believed to have *the best position* to mask the interest of the interviewer. *This is the confirmation that will be researched.*

As mentioned above, this study is about masking a ‘specific’ piece of information. Thus, the claims presented in the experiment will all be about the same event, but containing each a different detail from this event. Table 1 gives an overview of the different orders. The specific piece of information the interviewer wants to mask is the in italics confirmation in the table. It is believed to have *the best position* to mask the interest of the interviewer and stands for the *location of the attack*. The other two elements within the order are the date of the attack (formed as D) and the detonation type (formed as the remaining C).

Table 1

*Orders*

Title	Order
Following an incorrect alternative	Disconfirmation – <i>Confirmation</i> - Confirmation
Preceding an incorrect alternative – Type I	Confirmation – <i>Confirmation</i> - Disconfirmation
Preceding an incorrect alternative – Type II	<i>Confirmation</i> – Disconfirmation – Confirmation
Confirmation only	Confirmation – <i>Confirmation</i> - Confirmation

**Hypotheses**

Previous research found that sources interviewed with the Scharff technique believed that the interviewer held more information prior to the interview compared to sources interviewed with the Direct Approach. This results from the fact that the interviewer tried to establish the illusion of knowing by telling a detailed story to make it clear that he or she is well informed on the topic.

*Hypothesis 1:* the sources interviewed with the Scharff conditions will perceive the interviewer to hold more knowledge prior to the interview than sources interviewed with the Direct Approach.

Previous research has found that the Scharff technique outperforms the Direct Approach regarding masking of the interviewer information objectives. An explanation can be that the Scharff technique does not ask direct questions, whereas the Direct Approach does. Another explanation can be because one tactic of the Scharff technique is to ignore all new information revealed by the source.

*Hypothesis 2:* participants interviewed with the Scharff conditions will have a more difficult time understanding what information the interviewer was interested in compared to participants interviewed with the Direct Approach.

Previous research found that the participants in the Scharff confirmation condition (CCC) found it significantly more difficult to understand what information the interviewer was seeking to obtain than those in the Scharff disconfirmation condition. One may expect that



the confirmation tactic is more effective when aiming to elicit sensitive information in such a manner so as not to alert the source of the true purpose of the exchange. Though this previous study looked at the overall assessment of the interview, whereas the current study looks at specific pieces of information. This is why it is believed that, in this current study, the CCC condition will only result in random effects, because there is no disconfirmation present to direct attention. But it is still believed that the confirmation condition will outperform the Direct Approach.

Primacy and recency effects occur when a person recalls the items best at the beginning and the final position of the list. Recency effects reflect the output of short-term memory and primary effects reflect the output of long-term memory. After the interview the source may think back and remember the first part or the final part of the interview more clearly. The source may relate this to the interview objectives he/she thinks the interviewer was interested in. Because of the possible primacy and recency effects this condition will have the middle C as the interested piece of information. This piece of information stands for the location of the attack.

*Hypothesis 3:* using only confirmations (CCC) will be more effective in masking the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information (location of attack) compared to the Direct Approach.

With regard to the mixed claims, is predicted that the best option to mask the interviewer's information objectives will be the order in which a disconfirmation starts and ends with two confirmations. Immediately after the distraction will be the piece of information the interviewer is interested in. Thus, the piece of information the interviewer is interested in is 'following an incorrect alternative'.

The beginning will be with a distraction which will probably attract attention because the source cannot simply confirm the information. Because the information is incorrect the source will probably think why is this the case, as the interviewer presented himself as knowledgeable. The source may also think of what reply to give, take the chance to contribute or not. This distraction may influence the perception of the source of which piece of information the interviewer is really interested in. After the distraction the source may pay less attention to the following confirmations.

Additionally, the interested piece of information the interviewer is interested in will not be last in the order due to possible recency effect. Recency effect is the occurrence of remembering the items best at the final position of a list. Recency effect reflects the output of

short-term memory. After the interview the source may think back and remember the final part of the interview more clearly. The source may relate this to the interview objectives he/she thinks the interviewer was interested in.

*Hypothesis 4:* placing the piece of information the interviewer is interested in, following an incorrect alternative (DCC) will best mask the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information (location of attack).

*Hypothesis 4a:* the DCC condition will better mask the in interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information (location of attack) compared to the mixed condition CDC.

*Hypothesis 4b:* the DCC condition will better mask the in interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information (location of attack) compared to the mixed condition CCD.

*Hypothesis 4c:* the DCC condition will better mask the in interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information (location of attack) compared to the mixed condition CCC.

Predicted is that in order to mask the interest of a specific piece of information in the second-best way is have the interested piece of information preceding an incorrect alternative. Difference between Type I and Type II may lay in the primacy effect. Primacy effect is the occurrence of remembering the items best at the beginning of a list. Primacy effect reflects the output of long-term memory. After the interview the source may think back and remember the first part of the interview more clearly, compared to the middle. The source may relate this to the interview objectives he/she thinks the interviewer was interested in. But both orders are equal in the sense that they are preceding an incorrect alternative. This incorrect alternative, which will probably attract attention because the source cannot simply confirm the information. Because the information is incorrect the source will probably think why is this the case, as the interviewer presented himself as knowledgeable. The source may also think of what reply to give, take the chance to contribute or not. This distraction may influence the perception of the source of which piece of information the interviewer is really interested in. The source may pay less attention to the preceding confirmation after the distraction has occurred.

*Hypothesis 5:* placing the piece of information the interviewer is interested in, preceding an incorrect alternative (CCD & CDC) will better mask the

interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information (location of attack) compared to the CCC condition.

*Hypothesis 5a:* placing the piece of information the interviewer is interested in, preceding an incorrect alternative, in condition CDC, will better mask the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information (location of attack) compared to the CCC condition.

*Hypothesis 5b:* placing the piece of information the interviewer is interested in, preceding an incorrect alternative, in condition CCD, will better mask the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information (location of attack) compared to the CCC condition.

## Method

### Participants and design

307 persons participated in the study, with an age range from 15 till 68 years old (187 females, 117 males, 3 other; age  $M = 25.70$  years,  $SD = 8.96$  years). Participants were recruited through the online Sona System of Twente University, social media, online survey sites or through personal contacts. Requirements for participation was that participants should be older than 18 years and with sufficient English reading- and listening skills. Uncompleted surveys and obvious non-serious responses were exclusion criteria of this study. The participation pool mainly consisted of participants from Germany (30.62%) and the Netherlands (29.97%), also participants from other countries around the world, such as United Kingdom (11.08%), America (7.17%), India (2.61%) and Australia (1.95%). Before the experiment, all participants read and agreed to an informed consent.

This study had a between-subject design. Participants were randomly allocated to one of the four Scharff conditions or the Direct Approach condition. Experimental conditions, within the four Scharff conditions, included manipulations of the Scharff technique. Each Scharff condition contained a different sequence of two correct and one incorrect claim.

### Materials and procedure

The experiment consisted of an online study. The experiment was online for almost four months from the end of July till mid-October 2019. First the participant read the general instructions and gave the informed consent.

**Phase 1: Background and dilemma.** After the initial instructions a fictional case was presented in which the participant was asked to take the role as a source. Subsequently,

they obtained criminal information of an upcoming attack. The obtained criminal information was about an extremist group who are planning a bomb attack. The participant was asked to imagine the following; they once participated in a criminal act with this group and other members of this group were caught for this act, the participant would imagine it is only a matter of time before they catch him/her too. The participant received information about a planned bomb attack a number of other members of this same group are planning (for the background information, see Appendix A).

The background information was provided through a story that contained 33 specific pieces of information. 10 of these pieces of information were already known by the interviewer (see Appendix B for of all the pieces of information and pieces of information known by the interviewer). The participant did not have any knowledge of what was known to the interviewer. Additional to reading the case, the participant was asked to reflect upon the dilemma considering what and how much info to reveal. The participant needed to find a balance; the participant should neither reveal too much, nor too little information during the interrogation. The participant should provide some information because he or she wants to provide enough valid information to get a free pass on their own participation in the previous crime, but the participant does not want to provide too much information due to the fact that the participant still has friends within the group. After having read the case, the participant had to successfully pass a memory test (for the memory test, see Appendix C). This memory test contained ten questions with one right and one wrong answer. The participant could not continue with the interview unless all the questions were answered correctly, or when the faulty given answer(s) were corrected.

**Phase 2: Interview.** For the interview the participants pressed play and heard an introductory audio tape, in which the police interviewer welcomes the participant and explains the procedure of the interrogation. The voice of the police interviewer was a 37-year-old male with experience in the Scharff technique.

***The Scharff-technique.*** Participants in the Scharff conditions heard an audiotape (duration: 4m 02s) in which the interviewer employed a ‘friendly approach’ by opening the interview as follows: “Hi, good thing you called. How are you? Okay, well, there is an important reason for you contacting me, but before we start let me point out that I understand you’re in a difficult situation, but at the same time you must understand that we cannot accept this bomb attack to take place...”. Subsequently, the interviewer attempts to establish the ‘illusion of knowing it all’. This tactic was introduced by: “Anyway, I understand that you have quite a bit of information about their current plans, but first let me share some of the

information we already hold, without getting too specific” (see Appendix D for Scharff conditions interview introduction). The participants were required to listen to the full audiotape, and to better ensure of this a timer was used to restrict the participant to move on before the audiotape had ended. Next, the interviewer presented three written claims (i.e., the claims were not read out by the interviewer). The claims were written so the participant had sufficient time to understand the claim and corresponding answering options. These claims were presented individually. These claims concerned; (1) the location of the attack, (2) the date of the attack, and (3) detonation type of the bomb. The sequence of how the claims were presented and whether it held the correct or incorrect information depended on the experimental condition. Each claim could be answered by choosing one of the seven answering options. Answering options vary from ‘That is correct’ to ‘That is incorrect’, with less certain answering options in between (see Table 2 for an example and Table 3 for all the different orders and accompanying claims of the Scharff technique). Finally, Appendix E displays an overview of all the different orders, accompanying claims and answering options of the Scharff technique. After the last claim the participants had the chance to give additional information to the interviewer through a checklist which contained all the 33 pieces of information (see Appendix B for all the pieces of information).

Table 2

*Example experimental ‘CCD condition’ displaying claims and answering options, with the second claim being the interested piece of information ‘location of the attack’ and the third claim being the incorrect alternative ‘date of the attack’*

Claims	Answering options
1. "We know that they will detonate the bomb using an app on a cellphone"	1 - That is correct
2. "We know that they are going to blow the bomb at the shopping mall 'Hoog Catharijne' in Utrecht"	2 - That’s what I heard too, but I’m not sure 3 - All I know is that it is; a common electronic device/shopping mall/in that week
3. "We know that they plan to execute this attack on Monday 21st of October"	4 - I only heard; it will be in something electronic/something about a shopping mall/ 5 - I haven’t really heard anything about that 6 - I would say that is quite unlikely 7 - That is incorrect

Table 3

*All the different orders of the Scharff technique and one example of the accompanying claims (DCC condition), with the underlined letter matching the accompanying claims, and the in bold displayed claims being the 'location of the attack' which is the interested piece of information*

Orders				Claims
CCC	CCD	CDC	<u>DCC</u>	"We know that they plan to execute this attack on Monday 21st of October"
CCC	CCD	CDC	<u>DCC</u>	<b>"We know that they are going to blow the bomb at the shopping mall 'Hoog Catharijne' in Utrecht"</b>
CCC	CCD	CDC	<u>DCC</u>	"We know that they will detonate the bomb using an app on a cellphone"

**Direct Approach.** Participants in the Direct Approach heard a short introductory audio tape of 9 seconds, which opened in a business-like manner: “Hi, good thing you called. Take it you are well? Ok, shall we start talking about what we are supposed to talk about?”. Subsequently, the interviewer asked three open questions. These questions were presented one by one. The questions were the same for each participant in the Direct Approach condition. Table 4 displays the three questions and accompanying answering options. After the third question the participants had the chance to give additional information to the interviewer, identically to the Scharff conditions.

Table 4

*Questions from the Direct Approach and accompanying answering options*

Question	Answering options
1. "When are they planning to execute the bomb?"	1 - Saturday 26th of October/A cellphone/At the shopping mall 'Hoog Catharijne' in Utrecht
2. "What device are they planning on detonating the bomb with?"	2 - I heard something about; Saturday 26th of October/a cellphone/the shopping mall 'Hoog Catharijne' in Utrecht, but I'm not sure
3. "Where will the attack take place?"	3 - All I know is that; it will be in the last week of October/it is a common electronic device/it is a shopping mall 4 - I only heard; it will be sometime late in October/ it will be in something electronic/ something about a shopping mall 5 - I haven't really heard anything about that 6 - They were talking about some different options 7 - *You provide a wrong alternative to mislead the police

**Phase 3: Questionnaire** After the experiment the participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire about the interrogation. It was made clear to the participants that they were not playing a role anymore and they were asked to answer the questions honestly. The questionnaire contained sixteen questions (see Appendix F for questionnaire questions). For the general hypotheses de data is analysed through 7-point scales. Hypothesis 1, concerning participants' perception of the interviewer knowledge prior to the interview, was measured through the following scale question: 'How much information do you think your interrogator had about the attack prior to your conversation?'. With answering options varying from 1 (very little information) to 7 (a lot of information). Hypothesis 2, concerning the understanding of interviewer's information objectives, was measured through the following scale question: 'To what extent was it easy/difficult for you to understand what specific piece

of information your interrogator was after?'. With answering options varying from 1 (very easy to understand) to 7 (very difficult to understand).

The remaining three hypothesis, concerning the effects of different conditions (when masking the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information) was measured through the following question: 'Please, *make a top 3* of the topics you think your interrogator wanted to know most. Assign the number 1 to the information you think the interviewer was most interested in.'. Additionally, the same scale question as for hypothesis 2 was also used for analysis of these hypothesis. Subsequently, a couple of questions were asked which contained understanding of the instructions and motivation of participants. After these sixteen questions the questionnaire ends with three demographical questions.

## Results

A one-way ANOVA showed that the participants' motivation did not differ between the conditions  $F(4, 302) = 0.674, p = .610$ . The mean score for the motivation ( $M = 5.29, SD = 1.45$ ) of all participants was above the midpoint of the scale. Furthermore, it was assessed to what extent participants perceived their interviewer as friendly. A one-way ANOVA showed an effect  $F(4, 302) = 7.115, p < .001$ . The post-hoc Dunnett test showed that participants in the Direct Approach ( $M = 4.37, SD = 1.36$ ) perceived their interviewer as less friendly than participants in either the CCC-condition ( $M = 5.44, SD = 1.07$ ), DCC-condition ( $M = 5.23, SD = 1.24$ ), CDC-condition ( $M = 5.29, SD = 1.36$ ) or CCD-condition ( $M = 5.35, SD = 1.37$ ),  $p < .005$ . A one-way ANOVA was also conducted to see if the participants experienced the interviewer as using a type of tactic (strategy) during the interview. The results showed an effect  $F(4, 302) = 7.627, p < .001$ . The post-hoc Dunnett test showed that participants interviewed with Direct Approach perceived their interviewer was using less of a form of tactic related to participants interviewed with the Scharff conditions. The overall mean score to what extent participants perceived their interviewer as using tactic was 4.38 ( $SD = 1.48$ ), the mean score of the Direct Approach is 3.52 ( $SD = 1.41$ ). Finally, a one-way ANOVA for understanding the instructions of the study showed no effect  $F(4, 302) = 0.046, p = .996$ , with a mean score of 2.78 ( $SD = 1.69$ ) and a one-way ANOVA for difficulty of putting themselves in the role of informant also showed no effects  $F(4, 302) = 0.480, p = .750$ , with a mean score of 3.95 ( $SD = 1.77$ ).



## General hypothesis

**Perception of the interviewer's knowledge.** Hypothesis 1 stated that the sources interviewed with the Scharff conditions would perceive the interviewer to hold more knowledge prior to the interview than sources interviewed with the Direct Approach. A one-way ANOVA showed an effect  $F(4, 302) = 10.410$ ,  $p < .001$ . The post hoc Dunnett test showed that participants interviewed with the Scharff conditions perceived the interviewer to hold more knowledge prior to the interview than participants interviewed with the Direct Approach. Hence, hypothesis 1 was supported. See table 5 for means, standard deviations.

Table 5

*Means and standard deviations of the Scharff conditions (confirmation only and mixed) and the Direct Approach, for perceived amount of knowledge the interviewer held prior to the interview*

Condition	Mean	Std. Deviation
CCC	4.79 <sup>a</sup>	1.450
CCD	4.63 <sup>a</sup>	1.550
CDC	4.59 <sup>a</sup>	1.298
DCC	4.70 <sup>a</sup>	1.136
Direct Approach	3.45 <sup>b</sup>	1.276

*Note.* Different superscripts indicate that means are significantly different ( $p < .05$ ).

**Understanding interviewer's information objectives.** Hypothesis 2 stated that sources interviewed with the Scharff conditions would have a more difficult time understanding what information the interviewer was interested in compared to sources interviewed with the Direct Approach. A one-way ANOVA showed no effect,  $F(4, 302) = 1.700$ ,  $p = .150$ . For explorative reasons a post hoc Dunnett test was conducted. The post-hoc Dunnett test showed that participants in the DCC condition found it more difficult to read the interviewer's objectives than participants in the Direct Approach ( $p = .048$ ). The CCC, CCD and CDC conditions were also compared against the Direct Approach but showed no significant results (for all  $M$  and  $SD$ , see Table 6). The results showed that participants in the DCC condition had a more difficult time understanding what information the interviewer was interested in compared to participants interviewed with the Direct Approach. This partly supports hypothesis 2.

Table 6

*Means and standard deviations of the Scharff conditions (confirmation only and mixed) and the Direct Approach, for the extent it was easy/difficult to understand what specific piece of information the interviewer was after*

Condition	Mean	Std. Deviation
CCC	4.18 <sup>ab</sup>	1.466
CCD	4.15 <sup>ab</sup>	1.577
CDC	4.09 <sup>ab</sup>	1.466
DCC	3.69 <sup>a</sup>	1.413
Direct Approach	4.34 <sup>b</sup>	1.470

*Note.* Different superscripts indicate that means are significantly different ( $p < .05$ ).

**Hypothesis concerning effects of different conditions (when masking the interviewer’s interest in the specific piece of information)**

**CCC is superior to Direct Approach.** Hypothesis 3 stated that using only confirmations (CCC) would be more effective in masking the interviewer’s interest in the specific piece of information (location of attack) compared to the Direct Approach. In the related post-questionnaire question participants had to choose a top 3 of topics they thought their interviewer was most interested in. The participants had ten topics to choose from, these topics were all present somewhere in the background information or interview. See table 7 for the frequency that participants choose ‘location of attack’ in their top 3.

A Chi-Square Test showed no effect between the two conditions  $\chi^2(2) = 0.058, p = .971$ . The results showed that there is no difference in the masking of the interviewer’s interest in the specific piece of information between participants interviewed with the CCC condition and participants interviewed with the Direct Approach. Hence, hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Table 7

*Frequency of 'Location of Attack' in the participants' top 3 between CCC and Direct Approach*

Condition	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Total	Total participants in condition
CCC	25	23	5	53	61
Direct Approach	29	25	5	59	62

**Following an incorrect alternative is superior to other conditions.** Hypothesis 4 stated that placing the piece of information the interviewer is interested in, following an incorrect alternative (DCC) will better mask the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information (location of attack) compared to the CDC, CCD and CCC conditions. The same question was analyzed as with hypothesis 3. See table 8 for the frequency that participants choose 'location of attack' in their top 3. A Chi-Square Test showed no effect between of the condition DCC and the condition CDC,  $\chi^2(2) = 0.053, p = .974$ . Also, no effect was found between the condition DCC and the condition CCD,  $\chi^2(2) = 4.521, p = .104$ . Finally, no effect was found between the condition DCC and the condition, CCC  $\chi^2(2) = 3.964, p = .138$ . The results showed that there is no difference in the masking of the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information between participants interviewed with the DCC condition compared to participants interviewed with the CDC-, CCD- or CCC condition. Hence, hypothesis 4 is not supported.

However, independent t-tests were also conducted to compare the means between DCC and the other conditions referring to the extent that it was easy/difficult to understand what specific piece of information the interviewer was after. Thus, not looking at a specific piece of information but at the general understanding of the interview from the participants. Although there were no significant results, one result was very close and worth mentioning. It concerns the effect between the condition DCC and CCC  $t(123) = 1.914, p = .058$ . Indicating that a possibility exists that participants in the DCC condition had a more difficult time understanding what information the interviewer was interested in compared to participants interviewed with the CCC condition. See table 2 for the relevant means and standard deviations.

Table 8

*Frequency of 'Location of Attack' in the participants' top 3 between the Scharff conditions (confirmation only and mixed)*

Condition	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Total	Total participants in condition
DCC	14	27	8	49	64
CDC	15	27	9	51	58
CCD	22	22	3	47	62
CCC	25	23	5	53	61

**Preceding an incorrect alternative is superior to other conditions.** Hypothesis 5 stated that placing the piece of information the interviewer is interested in, preceding an incorrect alternative (CCD & CDC) will better mask the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information (location of attack) compared to compared to the CCC condition. The same question was analyzed as with the two hypotheses above. See table 8 for the frequency that participants choose 'location of attack' in their top 3. A Chi-Square test showed no effect between the condition CCD and the condition CCC  $\chi^2(2) = .355, p = .837$ . Also, no effect was found between the condition CDC and the condition CCC  $\chi^2(2) = 3.926, p = .140$ . The results showed that there is no difference in the masking of the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information between participants interviewed between the condition CCD and CCC or between the condition CDC and CCC. Hence, hypothesis 5 is not supported. Thus, the DCC condition does not better mask the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information compared to the condition CDC, CCD or CCC.

### Further testing

The other two pieces of information included in the presented claims/questions; date of the attack and detonation type also had a high presence in the top 3 ranking (see table 9). For these two variables there was a non-significant result in difference between the means of the five conditions, concerning the level of effectiveness in masking the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information. Chi square test for date of the attack:  $\chi^2(8) = 9.927, p = .270$  and Chi-square test for the detonation type:  $\chi^2(8) = 10.128, p = .256$ .

The answer containing how the bomb is concealed also had a high presence in the top 3 ranking, but was not included in the presented claims/questions.

Table 9

*Total of participants ranking location of the attack and detonation type in the their top 3 within the different conditions*

	Date of the attack	Detonation type
CCC	52	25
CCD	54	18
CDC	50	14
DCC	55	17
Direct Approach	61	12

## Discussion

The current study was conducted to further examine the Scharff technique. The aim was to explore the possible effects of different orders of incorrect (D=disconfirmation) and correct (C=confirmation) claims, to which could best mask the interviewer’s interest in a specific piece of information. No effects were found between the different types of sequences of the claim tactic when masking interviewer’s interest in specific information. However, the results showed that when a correct alternative (confirmation claim) was presented after an incorrect alternative (i.e., disconfirmation claim), the participant had a more difficult time understanding what information the interviewer was interested in general compared to participants interviewed with the Direct Approach. Thus, looking at the general understanding of the participants and not at the understanding of what specific piece of information the interviewer was after.

First, more general analyses were conducted. These analyses showed that the participants’ motivation did not differ between the conditions. Furthermore, it showed that participants interviewed with the Scharff technique perceived their interviewer as friendlier than participants from the Direct Approach, suggesting that the friendly approach tactic of the Scharff technique was successfully implemented. Additionally, participants interviewed with Direct Approach perceived that their interviewer was using a less tactical interview approach than did participants interviewed with the Scharff technique. Finally, no differences were

found between the interview conditions for understanding the instructions of the study or concerning the difficulty of putting themselves in the role of informant.

**Perception of the interviewer.** Participants interviewed with the Scharff technique perceived the interviewer to hold more knowledge prior to the interview compared to participants in the Direct Approach. Thus, this supported the first hypothesis and replicated previous studies. This finding was expected because of the ‘illusion of knowing it all’ tactic of the Scharff technique, whereas the Direct Approach lacked the presence of this tactic. In the Direct Approach the interviewer introduced the interview short and in a business-like manner. Whereas in the Scharff technique, the interviewer introduced the interview by elaborately speaking about information he already has in his possession.

It was expected to also replicate past research with the general hypothesis concerning the understanding of interviewer’s information objectives. It was expected that participants interviewed with the Scharff technique would have a more difficult time understanding what information the interviewer was interested in compared to participants interviewed with the Direct Approach. This hypothesis was not supported. However, one Scharff condition showed an effect. The effect was found between the condition in which the claim holding the interested piece of information was presented after a claim holding an incorrect alternative (DCC) and the Direct Approach. Participants interviewed with the ‘following an incorrect alternative’ condition had a more difficult time understanding what information the interviewer was interested in compared to participants interviewed with the Direct Approach. The remaining three Scharff conditions (CCC, CCD, CDC) showed no effect. This might indicate that when a claim holding the information unit of interest follows a claim holding an incorrect alternative (i.e., disconfirmation), participants might find it relatively more difficult to read the interviewers interest in their true information objective. It is unexpected that the ‘following an incorrect alternative’ condition showed an effect (vs. Direct Approach) where the other Scharff conditions did not show an effect. A possible explanation could be that the incorrect alternative in the DCC condition creates a stronger distraction. Which may influence the participants’ perception of which piece of information the interviewer is really interested in. However, as this ‘following an incorrect alternative’ condition does not display any effect when masking the interviewer’s interest in specific information (as will be discussed below) this effect should be interpreted with caution.

**Masking the interviewer’s interest in a specific piece of information.** The third hypothesis stated that only confirmations (CCC) will be more effective in masking the interviewer’s interest in the specific piece of information (i.e., the location of the attack)

compared to the Direct Approach. However, no difference was found between the Scharff confirmation condition and the Direct Approach. That is, with regard to the topics the participants choose in which the participants thought the interviewer was most interested. An effect was expected because of the directly asked questions about the three topics in the Direct Approach, as opposed to the confirmation condition which presented the three claims as a correct alternative. An explanation for this could be the set-up of the interview. In the current study the presented claims were written down, as opposed to an audio recording or face-to-face contact where the claims could be presented more smoothly during a story. The participants could take as much time as they wanted to react to the claim. This could affect the response behaviour of the participant because of the distinctly written claims and because of the lack of pressure to respond. This could be why participants of the Scharff condition had a good perception of which piece of information the interviewer was interested in.

On the other hand, the results replicate past studies such as the study of May, et al. (2014) and Oleszkiewicz, et al., (2014b). These studies found similar results, as participants interviewed with the Scharff technique and the Direct Approach did not differ in their understanding of what information the interviewer was seeking to obtain.

The fourth hypothesis stated that placing the piece of information the interviewer is interested in, following an incorrect alternative (DCC) will better mask the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information (location of attack) compared with other conditions (CDC, CCD, CCC). The results showed that there was no difference between participants from the condition in which the claim holding the interested piece of information was presented after a claim holding an incorrect alternative (i.e., disconfirmation) and other conditions, with concern to masking the interviewer's interest in the specific piece of information. Participants interviewed with the 'following an incorrect alternative' did not choose different topics in which they thought the interviewer was most interested compared with other conditions. This was not the expected result. Again, a possible explanation could be the way the claims were presented during the interview (written out). This could affect the response behaviour, as already explained more elaborately above.

However, when examining the perception of the participants (as with general hypothesis discussed above) a bordering statistical significance was found. Here the participants were asked to rate how difficult it was to understand what information the interviewer was interested in. Thus, looking at the general understanding of the participants and not at the understanding of what specific piece of information the interviewer was after. The result was found between the condition in which the claim holding the interested piece of

information was presented after a claim holding an incorrect alternative (following an incorrect alternative condition) and confirmation only condition. Indicating the possibility that participants in the ‘following an incorrect alternative’ condition had a more difficult time understanding what information the interviewer was interested in compared to participants interviewed with the confirmation only condition. It is assumed that this bordering to significant result is due to the incorrect alternative that was presented first in the ‘following an incorrect alternative’ condition. By presenting the claim holding the incorrect alternative before the claim holding the interested piece of information the interviewer might have drawn the source’s attention away from the remaining claim. This distraction may influence the participants’ perception of which piece of information the interviewer is really interested in. As mentioned before, effects concerning this ‘following an incorrect alternative’ condition should be viewed with caution but, it should also be recognized this condition may be stronger than the other Scharff conditions.

The fifth hypothesis stated that placing the piece of information the interviewer is interested in, preceding an incorrect alternative (CCD & CDC) will better mask the interviewer’s interest in the specific piece of information (i.e., the location of the attack) compared to the confirmation (CCC) condition. Again, the results showed no effect. There was no difference between participants interviewed in the condition in which the claim holding the interested piece of information was presented before a claim holding an incorrect alternative and other conditions. The participants from the ‘preceding an incorrect alternative’ condition did not choose different topics in which they thought the interviewer was most interested compared with the confirmation condition.

**Additional tests.** In additional testing the other two pieces of information, included in the presented claims/questions, ‘date of the attack’ and ‘detonation type’ were tested for effects. Both of the topics had a high presence in the topics the participants choose in which the participants thought the interviewer was most interested. No effects were found between the conditions. A lot of participants also thought ‘how the bomb is concealed’ was a topic the interviewer was most interested in. However, this topic was not presented in the claims or questions. Believed is that participants may have thought this would be an important piece of information for the interviewer and hence ranked this as a high interested topic.

## **Limitations**

The current study has some limitations. First, the full nature of a human intelligence interaction is difficult to model in an experimental setting. Especially with the current study



where the experiment was conducted online. The participants did not only have to imagine their involvement through back-ground information but also had to imagine the interview setting. As it was not a face-to-face interview setting, this may influence behavior of the participants and hence could influence the outcome of the experiment. Although results from this online experiment could be beneficial for practice or future research, it would be better, for valid results, if future research on this topic would construct the experimental setting as close to real life as possible. However, to make the interview as real-life as possible pre-recorded audio fragments were used to introduce the interview. If future research still consists of an online experimental setting it may be beneficial to audio record the claims/questions as well and to put a timer on the response time for the claims/questions. This way the pressure to respond may be higher, just as in real life interviews. This present study wanted to make sure participants understood the presented claims and questions, but this does not replicate a real-life interview as much as audio-recorded claims. Furthermore, a consequence of this experimental set-up was that participants were limited in their answering options. The participants had to choose from seven predetermined answering options. Finally, due to the online experimental set-up of the interview the experimenter had limited control over the experiment. Participants could be exposed to distractions because the experiment was conducted behind the participants' own computer in an environment of their choosing. This also gave a higher chance of participants that do not take the experiment serious, as there is no control. If an online experiment is still beneficial for future research it may be better if participants can complete the experiment 'on-site' in a controlled environment. Second, sources that would be in a real-life interview with the police would probably be more motivated to really think about their behavior and what answers to give. Everyone had a chance to participate in the experiment. Sources have different behavior and background and so is the sample.

## **Conclusion**

Improvement of techniques for human intelligence gathering is still crucial for today's society. The present study examined how the interviewer can best mask his interest in a specific piece of information using different positions of incorrect and correct claims within the claim tactic of the Scharff technique. This is the first study that investigated the effects of different types of sequences within claims of the Scharff technique while trying to elicit a specific piece of information. However, no differences were found between the different

types of sequences of the claim tactic when masking interviewer's interest on specific information. Nevertheless, looking at the general understanding of the source and not at the understanding of what specific piece of information the interviewer was after, the 'following an incorrect alternative' condition showed effects. A source that hears presented claims as 'following an incorrect alternative' can have difficulty in reading information interests. The results showed that sources in which the interested piece of information was presented after a claim holding an incorrect alternative (i.e., disconfirmation), had a more difficult time understanding what information the interviewer was interested in compared to sources interviewed with the Direct Approach. Furthermore, this same 'following an incorrect alternative' condition showed some promising results compared with the confirmation only condition (CCC) and should be explored more in future research. So, when trying to mask the interviewer's interest, at least for the general understanding of the source, it is beneficial to first present a disconfirmation and then present your interested piece of information. If possible, this interested piece of information should be presented as a confirmation. This study provided first results of the different orders of claims when eliciting a specific piece of information.

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## Appendix A

### Background information for the source

Imagine that economic problems, not caused by yourself, made you participate in the robbery of a cash transport van in the fall of 2018. The actual robbery went fine, but three months ago, the other three involved in the act got arrested. The only one who is still free is you, but you feel that this is only a matter of time. You know where most of the stash (approximately 4,5 million EUR) is kept. You understand that your time is scarce, and you immediately need to get the stash and move yourself and your money out of the country. Some time ago you got an idea of how it could all be solved, and briefly, your plan is as follows: Through a close friend, you have come by information that a radical political group in The Netherlands has future plans to perform a bomb attack in Utrecht, around the Autumn break. Your plan is to reveal information about this bomb attack to the special police force (DSI: Dienst Speciale Interventies), and in favour of the information receive free conduct out of The Netherlands. Ten days ago, you contacted the special police (anonymously of course) and carefully asked if there was any interest in talking further about this matter. DSI said that they were very interested in talking more thoroughly with you, and **it is this conversation you are now about to have.**

The group that is planning this bomb attack is called MDA and consists of a loosely assembled network of approximately 10 members. You are a close friend with one of the members, **and you feel some sympathy for the group's opinions.** After a lot of consideration, you have decided to reveal some information about the planned bomb attack to the police. You do understand that it is possible that the police already have some information about the planning—partly because DSI have conducted their own investigations, and partly because you have heard, from your friend, that a few of the members in MDA suspects that their phones have been tapped (but this is nothing they know for certain). In brief, you don't know what the police actually know about the planned attack (or if they know anything at all).

### Dilemma

When speaking to the police you should **absolutely not tell them everything you know.** First of all, you have, to say the least, a negative attitude toward the police. Also, if you

would reveal everything you know about the planning, it could jeopardize the entire existence of MDA, including your close friend, and might get them convicted for planning a very serious crime. If you tell too much, there is also an obvious risk that they will find out that it was you who “sold them out,” which means that you will be hunted by the entire group (and you are not prepared to go that far). On the other hand, **you cannot reveal too little**, because if you do so, there is a risk that the police won’t find your contribution to be significant enough to grant you free conduct out of The Netherlands. In order to be taken seriously, and appear trustworthy, you have to show some degree of goodwill and cooperation. In sum, you need to **find a good balance—neither revealing too much nor too little information**.

In spite of all the effort you have put into thinking this through, you still feel very hesitant about talking to the police at all, but nonetheless, you have decided to give it a try. However, you have not fully decided what specific information (and how much) you will reveal to the police. This decision is partly held open, and you will in some degree allow the development of the upcoming conversation to direct this matter.

### **Information about the attack**

What you know about the planning of the upcoming attack is as follows:

#### **General**

You know that the group planning the attack is called MDA, it consists of approximately 10 members and is based in Amsterdam. You also know that the group has been around since 2015 and came to existence as a result of the various immigration riots across the Netherlands in 2015. You know that the group, in cooperation with two Germans, had plans to execute a bomb attack in a conference centre in The Hague in 2016, where a political top meeting was held at the time. But that operation was cancelled due to internal conflicts. This conflict resulted in one of the leading figures of the group, Niek Jansen, leaving MDA.

#### **Your Relationship to MDA**

David de Vries, who is your close friend, and Niek Jansen founded MDA. You know the names of most of the members of MDA: Martin, Johannes, Erik, Sara, Peter, Saskia, Lisa, but have no further personal information about them. You know the background of the internal conflict that occurred in The Hague. In brief, Niek Jansen wanted to increase the effect of the attack with human casualties, something the Germans refused to go along with. Since the

other members sided with the Germans, this dispute led to Niek leaving MDA. Niek and David are currently bitter enemies, as it was David who introduced the Germans to MDA.

### **Specific Details about the Upcoming Attack**

You know that five persons are working more specifically with the planning of the upcoming attack. Among these five there are two Germans (a male and a female) who are both experts on explosives. You also know that these two German bomb experts participated in the planning of the bomb attack that would have been performed in The Hague (2016), which was cancelled. You know that the main shopping mall 'Hoog Catharijne' in Utrecht is subjected for the planned attack, and you know that the attack will take place on the last weekend of the Autumn break, namely Saturday 26th of October. You also know that the plan is to plant the bomb during lunch time and that the bomb will be detonated at 14.00 o'clock (PM), remotely via an app on a cellphone. The bomb will be placed in a TV, which will be brought for repairs at 12.30 o'clock (PM) The store, Mediamarkt, where the TV will be repaired is centrally located in the mall. You do not know what kind of bomb it is. You do not know where the bomb is located at the moment (or if it is manufactured yet).

## Appendix B

### All the pieces of information

<b>Group:</b>	Called MDA
<b>Group:</b>	10 members
<b>Group:</b>	Based in Amsterdam
<b>Group:</b>	Founded after immigration riots across NL (2015)
<b>History:</b>	Have planned an attack previously
<b>History:</b>	Have planned a bomb attack in The Hague
<b>History:</b>	Have planned a bomb attack in 2016
<b>History:</b>	The planned attack was cancelled
<b>History:</b>	Cancellation due to internal conflict
<b>History:</b>	Niek Jansen left the group after the internal conflict
<b>Active group:</b>	5 persons are planning the attack
<b>Active group:</b>	3 persons are Dutch
<b>Active group:</b>	2 persons are Germans
<b>Expertise</b>	There are bomb experts
<b>Expertise:</b>	There is one female and one male bomb expert
<b>Expertise:</b>	The Germans are the bomb experts
<b>Area:</b>	Utrecht
<b>Area:</b>	Somewhere in Utrecht city center
<b>Area</b>	Shopping mall in Utrecht
<b>Area:</b>	Shopping mall 'Hoog Catharijne' in Utrecht
<b>Bomb placement:</b>	Placed in some kind of apparatus
<b>Bomb placement:</b>	Placed in a TV



**Bomb placement:** TV brought for repairs

**Bomb place:** TV brought for repairs at MediaMarkt

**Date:** Around the Autumn break

**Date:** Last weekend in October

**Date:** Saturday 26th of October

**Time of detonation:** In the afternoon

**Time of detonation:** In the early afternoon

**Time of detonation:** At 14.00 o'clock

**Detonation type:** Remotely

**Detonation type:** Remotely via an electronic device

**Detonation type:** Remotely via an app on a cellphone

#### **Pieces of information already known by the interviewer**

The group is called MDA

The group was founded in 2015

The group involves 10 members

Niek Jansen left the group due to an internal conflict

Five persons are involved in the upcoming attack

There are bomb experts

There is one female and one male bomb expert

The upcoming attack is happening in Utrecht

The upcoming attack is happening in October

The bomb will be detonated remotely

## Appendix C

### The memory test

*Where will the attack take place?*

- Shopping mall 'Hoog Catharijne' in Utrecht
- Shopping mall 'The Wall' in Utrecht

*When will the attack take place?*

- First Saturday of October (5<sup>th</sup>)
- Last Saturday of October (26<sup>th</sup>)

*How will the bomb be detonated?*

- Via an app on a cellphone
- Via a self-made electronic device

*What is the name of the group who is planning the attack?*

- The group is called SDF
- The group is called MDA

*How many people are planning the current attack?*

- Three people
- Five people

*How many of the people involved are Germans?*

- None of the people
- Two of the people

*Does the group include any bomb experts?*

- Yes, the group does include bomb experts
- No, the group does not include bomb experts

*Who left the group due to internal conflict?*

- Niek Jansen
- Henry Smit

*Where will the bomb be planted?*

- The bomb will be planted in the MediaMarkt
- The bomb will be planted in the Primark

*How will the bomb be concealed?*

- In a washing machine
- In a TV

## Appendix D

### Interview Introduction Scharff Technique

Hi. How are you?

Okay, well, there is an important reason for you contacting me, but before we start let me point out that I understand you're in a difficult situation, but at the same time you must understand that we cannot accept this bomb attack to take place. As you might understand, we already know quite some things about MDA and their planned attack in Utrecht. So, I was thinking, in order to make this conversation more effective, I hope you don't mind if I start by sharing some of the information we already hold ...

We know that you and David are well acquainted, and that you have known each other for quite some time. We also know that it was David who founded MDA together with Niek. Well, but now the times have changed, I am sure that you – as well as us – know that Niek is no longer a part of the group, after all the things that happened in 2016. I guess this was just a matter of time as Niek never managed to get along with the bomb experts anyways.

Fortunately for the group, the other members did not have any problems with the bomb experts. Of what we understand, Niek had a completely different philosophy than the bomb experts, when it comes to what and who to blow up so to speak. Yeah, and it was because of this conflict that their previous plans were cancelled.

Anyway, I understand that you've quite a bit of information about their current plans, but first let me share some of the information we hold, without getting too specific. We know that MDA is a political group that was formed in 2015 and that they consist of approximately 10 members. We also know that not everyone will be involved in the actual execution of the attack. We understand that the purpose of the attack is to create political headlines for their cause, which will become quite dramatic as they plan to execute this around the Autumn break. As you surely understand, it is of the highest priority for us to prevent this attack, because even if MDA doesn't aim to hurt people, because the time and location of the attack makes it very serious, considering the number of people considering the amount of people running around during the holidays.

Okay, if I should get more to the point, we know that five persons are involved in the current planning, which of course, includes the man and the women ... yeah the two bomb experts who are essential in running this difficult operation and they plan to build a bomb that will be triggered from a distance via a remote detonator. We also know that they will want to avoid human casualties this time around, as this is more or less a condition for the people left in the group – However, I do believe they have underestimated the actual risk here, the risk to injure, or even kill people with this attack. I mean, it is quite clear that they will not be able to avoid making considerable collateral damage.

Well yes, this is some of the more information we hold. And I hope that I didn't make you uncomfortable by taking the decision to take the initiative in this conversation. And I want to once again point out that I am aware of the situation that you are in, and understand that you feel threatened. But I hope you understand that I have no plans to sell you out and I guarantee to you that your identity and involvement will remain completely confidential. So, after you have heard some of the things we already know, you probably understand that we already possess information that is of direct value for us... But we are of course interested to hear what you know.

## Appendix E

### Scharff Technique: orders, accompanying claims and answering options

#### CCC

*"We know that they are planning to execute this attack on Saturday 26th of October"*

- 1 - That is correct
- 2 - That's what I heard too, but I'm not sure
- 3 - All I know is that it will be in that week
- 4 - I only heard it will be sometime late in October
- 5 - I haven't really heard anything about that
- 6 - I would say that is quite unlikely
- 7 - That is incorrect

*"We know that they are going to blow the bomb at the shopping mall 'Hoog Catharijne' in Utrecht"*

- 1 - That is correct
- 2 - That's what I heard too, but I'm not sure
- 3 - All I know is that it is a shopping mall
- 4 - I only heard something about a shopping mall
- 5 - I haven't really heard anything about that
- 6 - I would say that is quite unlikely
- 7 - That is incorrect

*"We know that they will detonate the bomb using an app on a cellphone"*

- 1 - That is correct
- 2 - That's what I heard too, but I'm not sure
- 3 - All I know is that it is a common electronic device
- 4 - I only heard it will be in something electronic
- 5 - I haven't really heard anything about that
- 6 - I would say that is quite unlikely
- 7 - That is incorrect

#### CCD

*"We know that they will detonate the bomb using an app on a cellphone"*

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*"We know that they plan to execute this attack on Monday 21st of October"*

- 1 - That is correct
- 2 - That's what I heard too, but I'm not sure
- 3 - All I know is that it will be in that week
- 4 - I only heard it will be sometime late in October
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## **CDC**

*"We know that they are going to blow the bomb at the shopping mall 'Hoog Catharijne' in Utrecht"*

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## DCC

*"We know that they plan to execute this attack on Monday 21st of October"*

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- 4 - I only heard it will be sometime late in October
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- 6 - I would say that is quite unlikely
- 7 - That is incorrect

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- 2 - That's what I heard too, but I'm not sure
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**Appendix F**  
**Questionnaire**

1. If you think back to the conversation, how much of the total information did you share with you contact person? (circle the number which represents your own perception)

No information    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    All the information

2. How much information do you think your contact person had about the attack prior to your conversation?

Very little information    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    A lot of information

3. What specific information regarding the attack did you perceive as your interrogator knowing prior to your interrogation? Select the alternatives that describe the information you perceived your interrogator as already knowing prior to your interrogation. It is important that you select only the alternatives you are sure your interrogator already knew (you can select multiple answers). ***This information will be compared to what the interrogator actually knew prior to the interrogation.***

*Appendix B 'All the pieces of information' was provided.*

4. Of all the information you shared, how much of it do you think was completely new information to you contact person?

Nothing was completely new    1    2    3    4    5    6    7    All of it was completely new

5. Which of the information *you shared* during the entire interview do you think was completely new to the interrogator? Select the alternatives that describe the information you have shared of which you think was completely new to your interrogator (you can select

multiple answers)

*Appendix B 'All the pieces of information' was provided.*

6. To what extent was it easy/difficult for you to understand the specific information your contact person was after?

Very easy to understand      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Very difficult to understand

7. Please, **make a top 3** of the topics you think your interrogator wanted to know most.

Assign the number 1 to the information you think the interrogator was most interested in.

- Nationality of the bomb experts
- Date of the attack
- Name of the group
- Location of the attack
- Amount of people who are planning the attack
- Involvement of bomb experts
- Detonation type
- Internal conflict in the group
- How bomb is concealed
- Location where group is based

8. To what extent did you perceive your contact person as friendly?

Not pleasant at all      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Very pleasant

9. How nervous were you during the conversation?

Not nervous at all      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Very nervous

10. How motivated were you to complete your “mission” (i.e. keeping the balance between not sharing too much/too little information with your contact person)?

Not motivated at all      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Very motivated

11. In comparison to what you had initially planned, did you give more or less information during the actual conversation (than planned)?

Less information      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      More information

12. If you gave your interrogator false information (or ended up saying something wrong), please indicate on which topic you gave false information and explain what made you do that.

- I did not give false information
- I gave false information, please name the topic and reason  
.....

13. To what extent are you pleased with your own efforts during the interview?

Not pleased at all      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Very pleased

14. How difficult did you think it was to understand the instructions of the study?

Not difficult      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Very difficult

15. How difficult was it to put yourself in the role of an informant?

Not difficult      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      Very difficult

16. To what extent did you experience your contact person using a form of tactic (strategy) during the conversation?

Very low degree    1       2       3       4       5       6       7       Very high degree

**Finally, we would like to know some demographic information about you.**

What is your nationality?

.....

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

What is your age?

.....