

**How Humanistic and Accusatory Interview Styles Affect Information Yield in Simulated  
Investigative Interviews With Suspects**

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## **Abstract**

The most effective approach to gain the largest amount of information from suspects is still researched and debated. In this study, an experiment was conducted in order to test the humanistic and accusatory interview styles during a police interview. The humanistic approach has the goal of gaining as much information as possible from suspects. Accusatory approaches have the main goal of eliciting a confession from a suspect. The main focus of this study was to find out which interview style results in the largest information yield from suspects. Furthermore, rapport was investigated, as well as perceived risk, anxiety, and perceived performance. These variables were included to research the reasons why information yield might be affected by the interview style. Finally, we also compare the difference between guilty and non-guilty suspects to see whether interview style has a different effect depending on suspect guilt.

To test the hypothesis that the humanistic style would result in a larger information yield compared to the accusatory style, mock police interviews were conducted. Two types of vignettes were given to participants. One type of vignette was for guilty suspects, and the other type for non-guilty suspects. Participants were randomly divided over four conditions. Participants could either receive the guilty, or the non-guilty vignette. Furthermore, participants could be interviewed by either the humanistic or the accusatory style. After the interview, different questionnaires regarding rapport, perceived risk, anxiety, and perceived performance were filled in by the participants.

The results show a difference in the information yield for guilty and non-guilty participants depending on interview style. Guilty participants gave more unscripted details in the accusatory style. In contrast, non-guilty participants gave more scripted details in the humanistic style.

The findings show that accusatory interviews help increase information yield from guilty participants. Humanistic interviews have been shown to increase information yield from innocent suspects. It seems that innocent suspects try to provide as much information as possible, but do not embellish their accounts as much as guilty participants. Accusatory interviews make guilty suspects feel that giving answers was required, even if it means providing inaccurate details. Humanistic interviews facilitate accurate disclosure from innocent suspects. No evidence was found for the proposed mechanisms of rapport, perceived risk, and anxiety.

Conducting a police interview can be very challenging. It is crucial to obtain as much information as possible during such an interview, as a larger information yield can provide the interviewer with more evidence (Kim, Alison, & Christiansen, 2020). Furthermore, the information can give cues to certain parts of the account that need to be questioned further (Gabbert, Hope, Luther, Wright, & Oxburgh, 2020). The information yield is an important aspect of a successful prosecution case. Furthermore, there needs to be evidence that the interviewee has been treated well during the interview, or at the least that the suspect had not been exposed to coercive practices (Alison, Alison, Noone, Elntib, & Christiansen, 2013). This can cause prosecution cases to be negatively affected by poor treatment of the suspect. This is because the information that is obtained then becomes unreliable (Alison et al., 2013).

This is why interviewers have to decide the manner in which to conduct an interview, as this could potentially have major effects on the course of the investigation. Over the years, different strategies have been developed and used. Some have proven to be more effective, or seen as more ethical, than others. Some methods have proven to increase the chance of innocent suspects making a false confession, or increasing presumptions of guilt that the interviewer has (Loney & Cutler, 2016; May, Gewehr, Zimmermann, Raible, & Volbert, 2020; Portnoy et al., 2019). This can happen when, for example, an interviewer might offer excuses for the crime as to give the suspect a false sense of safety (May et al., 2020). In contrast, the interviewer could also exaggerate the consequences of the crime to intimidate the suspect. Other methods may help increase cooperation in an interview and can increase the amount of information obtained (Kim, Alison, & Christiansen, 2020). For example, the interviewer can explain the purpose of the interview, as well as ask open questions (May et al., 2020).

In this study, a distinction will be made in the interview styles that the prior examples are based on. These are the accusatory interview style and the humanistic interview style (Vrij, Mann, & Fisher, 2006). The reason for this, is that the distinction between information-gathering interview styles and coercive interview styles was often made in prior research. The purpose is to see if humanistic interview styles help increase the information yield. The reasons for the possible effect of interview style on the amount of information disclosed will be looked into as well. Finally, it will be investigated if suspect guilt has any effect on information provision.

### **The accusatory approach**

In the accusatory approach, the interviewer assumes the suspect's guilt and the interview has the explicit goal to obtain a confession (Adam & van Golde, 2020; Vrij, Granhag, & Porter,

2010; Vrij, Mann, & Fisher, 2006). In this approach, the interviewer tries to force a confession by making use of confrontations, manipulation, persuasion, and other suggestive tactics (May et al., 2020). An example of an accusation might be that the interviewer says “I am sure that you committed the crime” (Vrij et al., 2006). In any regard, an interview conducted in this manner can create an immense feeling of pressure on the suspect’s side (Brimbal, Kleinman, Oleszkiewicz, & Meissner, 2019). Whilst this may seem reasonable, putting this amount of pressure on a suspect can have harmful consequences. One of the major problems that can arise, are the increase in the amount of false confessions made by innocent suspects due to the amount of pressure (Adam & Van Golde, 2020; Alison et al., 2013; Gudjonsson, 2003). A reason for this could be that the accusatory approach prioritizes getting a confession over increasing the information yield. In other cases, suspects may provide inaccurate information to mislead the interviewer (Adam & Van Golde, 2020). It might also be the case that suspects feel the need to explain away any evidence that is presented to them, which can promote speculation in the suspects’ accounts. These kinds of unverified details are important to distinguish from accurate information.

Furthermore, reliability and accuracy of the information provided by the suspect can be questioned in some case. This can happen whenever information has been provided due to external pressure, threats, lengthy interviews, or promises of decreased consequences (Alison et al., 2013). Any confession made will then be ruled inadmissible, regardless of the potential truth in the confession.

It is crucial to prevent any coercion from influencing the police interview. Some countries have approaches to handle this issue (Solodow & Solodov, 2020). Examples of these approaches are: limits to the duration of interrogations, making audiotapes of the interview, having frequent breaks, and provide protection for vulberable suspects (Gudjonsson, 2003; Solodov & Solodov, 2020). However, in The Netherlands, no such extensive rules are used to prevent coercion (Geijsen, 2018). What is described in the General Interrogation Strategy (GIS), is mainly to explain the legal rights, the role that the lawyer has if the lawyer is present, and the procedure of the interrogation. It does state that any distress could lead to a false confession. However, the GIS has a basis in building the internal pressure of the suspect, as well as to minimize any resistance, which has more foundation in the accusatory interview style. It is even said that some components resemble components found in the Reid method of interrogations (Geijsen, 2018). This method is widely considered to be a coercive and unreliable method of interviewing (Gudjonsson, 2003; Loney & Cutler, 2016). When using the Reid method, the interviewer tries to counter any resistance and tries to exploit the suspect’s

vulnerabilities (Gudjonsson, 2003). One of the tactics, minimization tactics, are used to give a false sense of safety by being sympathetic and to downplay the seriousness of the crime. The interviewer uses a friendly demeanor in order to try to win the trust of the suspect (Horgan, Russano, Meissner & Evans, 2012).

A contrasting method to the minimization tactic is the maximization tactic, which will be used in this study. The maximization tactic is typically one where the interviewer directly accuses a suspect of being guilty. Maximization tactics are seen as psychologically coercive, because the interviewer makes use of focusing on any harm caused by the suspect, as well as increasing the perceived severity of likely punishment. This is done by making use of exaggerations of the evidence known, as well as how serious the offence is (Horgan et al., 2012; Leo, 2020; May et al., 2020). Sometimes, evidence can even be falsified (Leo, 2020). This treatment can often lead to an expectation by the suspect of there being higher consequences for the crime for themselves (Luke & Alceste, 2020). In other words, the suspect has a higher perceived risk for punishment. Perceived risk in this study is explained as the perceived risk that a suspect has of the interviewer thinking they are guilty of committing the crime. This is split into two parts: likelihood and severity. Likelihood is how likely a suspect thinks it is that the interviewer will think they are guilty. Severity is in regards to how severe the consequences are perceived if the interviewer does think that the suspect is guilty. A higher perceived risk might lead to a decrease in the amount of information that is given. This is due to the accusatory interview style being used to instill fear in suspects. Strong emotions, such as fear, can influence risk perception (Mrkva, Cole, & Van Boven, 2020). It is hypothesized that the pressure and fear that suspects can experience in the accusatory interview style could increase risk perception.

Furthermore, the effect of the accusatory style on the perceived risk will be investigated. Whenever a suspect has an increased perceived risk, it could be argued that the anxiety about those risks will increase as well. In the accusatory interview style, pressure on the suspect is so high that it is expected that anxiety will increase. Therefore, anxiety will also be investigated in this study.

### **The humanistic approach**

The humanistic approach has a different goal from the accusatory approach, namely gathering as much reliable and accurate information as possible (Adam & van Golde, 2020; Vrij et al., 2010). The humanistic approach can be described as honest, non-judgmental, and empathic (Kim et al., 2020). In contrast to the pressure and manipulation used in the accusatory

method, the humanistic approach is built on principles of creating a more collaborative environment (Brimbal et al., 2019; May et al., 2020).

A tool to help implement the humanistic approach, is The PEACE method. This was first developed in the UK in the early 1990s (Adam & Van Golde, 2020). The UK then started to improve the PEACE method and started to focus on conducting interviews in an effective and ethical manner. Information gathering was deemed more important than gaining a confession. It was shown that the rate of false confessions decreased and interviews were improved (Milne & Bull, 2003). Using this method, an interviewer can be supported in structuring the interview and making correct judgments (Brimbal et al., 2019; Gudjonsson, 2003). PEACE consists of five stages: Preparation and Planning, Engage and Explain, Account, Closure, and Evaluation (Gudjonsson, 2003). In the first stage, the aims and objectives of the interview are determined. A strategic plan to achieve those aims and objectives is developed. Next, the interviewer explains the purpose of the interview to the suspect, the conversation starts, and all persons involved are introduced. In this stage, it is important to establish rapport to facilitate disclosure. The third stage consists of gaining the suspect's initial account, as well as clarifying and challenging the statements made by the suspect. In the Closure stage, the interview is concluded and the suspect can make corrections or add on to the information. The final stage makes room for evaluating the information obtained during the interview, as well as the performance of the interviewer.

There is evidence that approaches that follow the PEACE method are more effective in getting investigative relative information from suspects (Alison et al., 2013; Gabbert et al., 2020). Kim et al. (2020) found that interviews that make use of the humanistic approach, can have a positive influence on the suspect cooperating, which can lead to more information being obtained. Vrij et al. (2006) also show that the humanistic approach can lead to a suspect giving more information related to the specific crime due to suspects being encouraged to talk more. Furthermore, as the suspect is not directly accused of committing a crime, it can help decrease the amount of pressure a suspect might feel. Finally, it is deemed more ethical than the accusatory approach.

Yet, the mechanisms by which the humanistic approach leads to more information provision is still not clear. One possibility is that suspects might have a lower risk perception compared to the accusatory approach, and more specifically when maximization tactics are used. This lower risk perception could lead to a suspect feeling more inclined to share information. This is in contrast to the maximization tactic, in which the risk perception of suspects would be heightened due to the higher pressure. Whenever a suspect feels there is a low, or even no risk

tied to providing information, it will be tested if the information yield will be higher. Therefore, risk perception is an important factor to look into further.

Another possibility is that the interpersonal relationship between the suspect and interviewer can influence the information yield. This relationship can be investigated by looking into the concept of rapport. The Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal's model of rapport is the most influential model of rapport for investigative interviews (Gabbert et al., 2020, Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1987; Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). This model consists of three parts: coordination, positivity, and mutual attentiveness. Coordination is explained as the existence of a shared understanding, and a fluent and balanced interaction. Positivity is a positive affect, friendliness towards each other, and caring for each other. Mutual attentiveness occurs when both parties are involved, have a mutual interest, and have a focused and cohesive interaction. Abbe and Brandon (2013) do criticize the positivity component of the rapport model. Due to a different perceived status that can occur in interrogations, it could be more likely that perceived competence is more important than positivity. This is because it is possible that there is a good level of rapport in a certain relationship, even if that relationship is not perceived as positive. Therefore, it is proposed that 'unconditional neutral regards' can be seen as more realistic in specific situations, such as a police interview.

There have been multiple studies that explored the importance of building rapport within investigative interviews (Abbe & Brandon, 2013; Alison et al., 2013; Gabbert et al., 2020). One of the reasons for this, is that rapport is said to increase the information yield in an interview (Alison et al., 2013; Gabbert et al., 2020). Another reason for making use of rapport, is that it could help in improving trust and building relationships (Abbe & Brandon, 2013). Building trust and a relationship is especially important to increase the chances of cooperation (Gabbert et al., 2020). It is theorized that it could also lead to suspects viewing the interview as more positively.

Unfortunately, the definition, manipulation, and measurement of rapport is still not fully agreed upon (Alison et al., 2013; Gabbert et al., 2020). Also, some studies did not find a clear correlation between rapport and disclosure (Gabbert et al., 2020). Despite this, there is still a widespread assumption that rapport can lead to more information provision. Alongside this assumption, there is the expectation that humanistic interview styles are better for building rapport than accusatory interviews (Weiher, 2020). Therefore, it will be tested if it is indeed the case that humanistic interviews are associated with a higher level of rapport than accusatory interviews. Additionally, it will be tested if the information yield and rapport is correlated.

Finally, the factors of anxiety and perceived performance will be investigated to see if there is any effect on the information yield. Perceived performance is in regards to the suspect feeling that they were successful in convincing the interviewer that they are innocent, regardless of guilt or innocence. Due to the nature of accusatory interviews putting a lot of pressure on suspects, it can be theorized that participants will experience a lower level of perceived performance during and after the interview. When perceived performance is rated low by participants, it could lead to a lower information yield. When participants are under less pressure and have a lower perceived risk, it is expected that participants will believe they performed better. This could increase information yield, because participants are expected to feel safer to share more details. It is important to take into account that perceived performance could actually be influenced by information provision. In accusatory interviews, the level of anxiety might be higher due to the pressure put on suspects. This is important, because a higher level of anxiety might lead to a lower information yield than when the level of anxiety is lower. Suspects could feel safer to share more details when their level of anxiety is lower and they feel less pressure from the interviewer. Therefore, it is expected that the perceived performance will be higher and level of anxiety will be lower when the suspect is interviewed using the humanistic approach. This approach does not make use of putting large amounts of pressure on the suspect. Furthermore, the manner of questioning and the information provision is thought to ensure that the suspect will feel safer to share more details. In short, the effect of interview style on perceived performance and anxiety will be investigated. Furthermore, the relationship between information provision and perceived performance, as well as anxiety will be looked into.

In this study, we will investigate if there are indeed significantly more positive effects of using a humanistic approach rather than an accusatory approach.

### **This research**

The humanistic and accusatory interview styles could potentially have a major effect on the interview itself, and the interviewee as well. To investigate if there is indeed a difference between these interview styles, there are a few factors that will be researched. Interviews in either the humanistic or accusatory style will be conducted on participants that are either guilty or innocent. First of all, the amount of information that a suspect provides is the most important outcome. Therefore, it will be tested if interview style does indeed lead to more information being disclosed. Humanistic interviews will be specifically associated with an increase in accurate, or scripted details. Any unverified information provision will also be checked. As



some research has found the humanistic approach was found to have a greater information yield, the first hypothesis is:

*H1:* There is a significant larger Number of Details disclosed in the Humanistic interview style compared to the Accusatory interview style.

Connected to this is the use of rapport, which has also been found to potentially have an effect on the amount of disclosure of a suspect. Therefore, rapport will also be measured.

*H2:* There is a significant higher level of Rapport for the Humanistic interview style compared to the Accusatory interview style. There is a positive correlation between rapport and information provision.

Furthermore, how participants perceive the risk of the interviewer thinking they are guilty will be assessed. To do this, there will be a scale measuring perceived risk. For perceived risk, both likelihood and severity will be measured. The likelihood stands for the perceived likelihood that the interviewer thinks the participant is guilty. The severity stands for the severity of the consequences that might occur if the interviewer thinks the participant is guilty.

*H3:* There is a significant lower level of Perceived Risk for the Humanistic interview style compared to the Accusatory interview style. There is a negative correlation between Perceived Risk and information provision.

Additionally, anxiety that participants may feel during the interview will be measured. As some studies have shown, by making use of an accusatory approach, there is a potential increase of pressure on the participant. Therefore, the effect of the interview styles on anxiety will be investigated.

*H4:* There is a significant lower level of Anxiety for the Humanistic interview style compared to the Accusatory interview style. There is a negative correlation between anxiety and information provision.

Perceived performance will be measured as well. How well a participant feels the performance during the interview was, might have an influence on other factors. Therefore, it is important to investigate if perceived performance might have a significant effect.

*H5:* There is a significant higher level of Perceived Performance for the Humanistic interview style compared to the Accusatory interview style. There is a positive correlation between Perceived Performance and information provision.

Finally, there might be a difference between guilty and non-guilty participants in terms of how they react to the interview styles (May et al., 2020). Therefore, these groups will also be compared for all the dependent variables to see if there is a difference and if it is significant. It is expected that non-guilty participants will provide more information than guilty suspects. This is expected especially for the humanistic interviews. Furthermore, it is theorized that non-guilty participants will experience a higher level of rapport for the humanistic interview style. This is also linked to the expectation that non-guilty participants will experience a lower level of anxiety and perceived risk in the humanistic interviews. Perceived performance is theorized to be higher compared to guilty participants for the humanistic interviews.

## Methods

### Design

A 2x2 between-subjects factorial design was applied. The independent variables were Interview Style (Humanistic vs Accusatory) and Suspect Guilt (Guilty vs. Innocent). The participants were randomly divided over these conditions. Participants were either guilty or innocent, and were interviewed with either the humanistic or accusatory interview style. The dependent variables were the amount of information provided by participants, perceived rapport with the interviewer, the perceived likelihood that the interviewer believed the suspect was guilty, the perceived severity of consequences if the interviewer believed the suspect was guilty, state anxiety, and perceived performance. Information provision was split into scripted details, unscripted details, and total details. The Perceived Performance scale measured how confident participants were about their performance during the interview. This experiment was granted ethical approval from the BMS ethics committee and the University of Twente.

### Participants

There were 80 participants recruited through convenience sampling. Most of the participants were Psychology students of the University of Twente. Out of all participants, 29 were recruited through SONA, which is a participant recruitment website used by the University of Twente. As a reward for participating in the experiment, students were awarded one SONA-credit. These credits were necessary for the students to complete the curriculum. Fifty-one of the participants were contacted by the researchers, and were part of the personal circle of the researchers. There was no reward given to these participants.

Two participants did not comply with the experiment instructions to explain the evidence against them. These participants did not provide any useable responses. Answers that were given by these participants were for example: “I don’t know”, or “I don’t remember”. The data of a third participant was lost giving a final sample of 77. These participants were divided over four groups of about 20. Twenty participants were assigned the Guilty and the Humanistic Interview Style group. There were also 20 participants were assigned the Guilty and Accusatory Interview Style group. Nineteen participants were part of the Non-Guilty and Accusatory Interview Style group. Finally, 18 participants participated in the Non-Guilty and Humanistic Interview Style group.

The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 57 ( $M = 23$ ,  $SD = 7.10$ ). There were 35 participants that were male, and 42 participants were female. The main nationality of the

participants was Dutch ( $n = 50$ ). Another 20 participants were German, and 7 participants were of other nationalities. The highest education that participants completed was high school for 30 participants, followed by a university bachelor for 21 participants, a university master for 17 participants, and a HBO education or non-Dutch equivalent for 9 participants.

## **Materials**

### ***Scenarios***

The scenarios were designed by the researchers themselves. Both guilty and innocent scenarios were identical, except for the details that indicated guilt or innocence. Each scenario described a person going into a leatherware shop, because they had been looking for a new wallet for some time. In both scenarios, the person was described as picking up a red wallet with a stain on the back. The person then took the wallet to the counter to negotiate a discount due to the damage, but there was no shop assistant. In the Non-Guilty scenario, the person would leave the wallet somewhere close to the counter, since the person was not sure where the wallet was supposed to go. This is why the shop would not be able to find the wallet, and conclude it must have been stolen. Being startled by a lady bumping into something, the person would then leave the shop. In the Guilty scenario, the person would look around to see no shop assistant. The other customer, the lady, would be occupied somewhere else. The person would then also be startled by the lady bumping into something. The person then put the wallet in their jacket, and left the store with the wallet. Then, in both scenarios, the person would see two police officers approaching from a distance. The Guilty person then would throw the wallet away in a nearby garbage bin. The two police officers would then arrest the person. The innocent suspect would have the goal to convince the interviewer of their innocence during the interview. The guilty suspect would have the goal to ensure they do not get in trouble. How this was interpreted was left to the participants. It was not specifically said that the participants had to convince the interviewer of their innocence. Only that the punishment should be as low as possible, or even non-existent. The scenarios can be found in Appendix 1.

### ***Interview Scripts***

The interview scripts were also designed by the researchers based on those of Weiher (2020) who also examined the impact of interview style on interview outcomes. As in Weiher (2020), the scripts differed only in the introductory part. This was done to ensure that differences in responses could be attributed to the interview style and not the questions. The Humanistic Interview Style started with an extensive explanation of the procedure and rules.

This was done to create a shared understanding of how the interview will be conducted as well as any mutual responsibilities. The model of rapport was used to help guide the development of the script. The participant would be told that the interview would be recorded and transcribed. Then, the interviewer would ask the participant to not interrupt, and the interviewer would do the same. Furthermore, the interviewer would explain that the participant should give all the information possible. Then, the purpose of the interview would be explained. In this case, the interview was due to a wallet that was missing from a store. Finally, the participant would be asked if there were any questions.

For the Accusatory Interview Style, the introduction part would be very different. There would not be any kind of explanation. The interviewer would simply tell the participant that they were sure that the participant stole the wallet. Then, the interviewer would try to make the participant feel guilt by focusing on the harm the crime can do, especially to small shops. The participant would be asked to cooperate and share how the participant had stolen the wallet. In this introduction, it would be made clear that the interviewer presumed guilt. This is all part of the maximization tactic in order to put pressure on the participant. Part of this tactic was also directly accusing the participant of having committed the crime, as well as not informing the participants of their rights.

The questions in both interviews would be the same in regards to the information that was asked. This was done to ensure that the information given by the participants could be compared effectively. However, the manner of asking the questions and the wording that was chosen was different in each interview style. The questions asked in the Humanistic Interview Style were asked in a manner that did not presume any guilt. For example: “We have evidence suggesting that you picked up a wallet. Can you explain that to me?”. In the Accusatory Interview Style, the questions would typically be asked in a way that did presume guilt. Also, the questions were worded so that it would more resemble a command rather than a question. For example: “We have confirmation that you picked up the wallet. Explain that to me.” The scripts can be found in Appendix 2.

### *Questionnaires*

**Pre-interview.** Only demographic information was asked. The questions consisted of age, gender, education level, and nationality. Participants could type in their age. Gender consisted of the options: man, woman, other, or prefer not to say. When clicking ‘other’ there was a space where participants could describe themselves however they wished to self-identify their gender. Education level consisted of six options: high school, MBO or non-Dutch

equivalent, HBO or non-Dutch equivalent, University Bachelor, University Master, and Ph.D., or higher. Finally, participant were asked to type in their nationality.

### **Post-interview.**

*Rapport Scale.* The Rapport Scales for Investigative Interviews and Interrogations 2 (RS3i) Interviewee Version was used to measure rapport (Duke, Wood, Bollin, Scullin, & LaBianca, 2018a). This is a self-report measure. The RS3i was specifically designed for interviews regarding intelligence and forensics. Therefore, it was a good fit for this study. This questionnaire consists of 21 questions, and has a 5 point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. A high score on the Likert Scale indicated a high level of Rapport. The questions consist of 6 subscales. These were: Attentiveness, Trust/Respect, Expertise, Cultural Similarity, Connected Flow and Commitment to Communication. The participants were asked to answer the questions in a manner that would reflect the current level of rapport that they were feeling. An example is: “The Interviewer really listened to what I had to say”. This questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3. The Cronbach’s Alpha was .94.

*Perceived Risk Scale.* The second questionnaire measured the perceived risk of the interview having any repercussions if the interviewer believes the participant to be guilty (Appendix 3). This questionnaire was designed by the researcher and consists of 14 questions. This questionnaire was developed from scratch, and were guided by the likelihood and severity components of perceived risk. Items one to seven consisted of questions regarding how likely the participant perceived there to be any repercussions for them after the interview. For example, “I think that I was able to persuade the interviewer that I am not worth continuing to investigate in relation to this crime”. Items eight to 14 would then question the perceived severity of said repercussions that the participant would perceive. For example, one of the questions was: “I think that, if the interviewer thinks I am guilty, I will not be punished strongly.” This example is one of the reverse coded question. The Likelihood and Severity subscales were presented in this order. This is because the likelihood questions did not ask the participants to presume guilt, whereas the severity questions did. This questionnaire made use of a 7 point Likert Scale ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. A high score on the Likert Scale indicates a high level of perceived risk. The participants were asked to answer the questions to reflect the current state of perceived risk. The Cronbach’s Alpha for the Likelihood scale was .79. The Cronbach’s Alpha for the Severity scale was .75.

*Anxiety Scale.* The State Trait Anxiety Inventory was used to measure anxiety (Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983) (Appendix 3). The full questionnaire measures both State and Trait Anxiety. However, for this study, only State Anxiety was applicable. Therefore, the first half of the questionnaire that consists of State Anxiety questions was used. This was to measure the level of anxiety the participants felt at that moment. An example of a question used is: “I am worried”, or “I feel at ease”. This questionnaire consists of 20 questions, and makes use of a 4 point Likert Scale. 1 stands for Not at all, 2 for A little, 3 for Somewhat, and 4 for Very much so. The participants were asked to answer the questions to describe their current state. The Cronbach’s Alpha was .93.

*Perceived Performance Scale.* Finally, a questionnaire was used to measure how well the participants believed they had performed in the interview regarding convincing the interviewer of their innocence. All scales can be found in Appendix 3. This questionnaire was developed by the researcher, and consists of four questions. This questionnaire would measure how well a participant thought the interview went in terms of convincing the interviewer, and if the participant was able to reach the goal that was given. An example is: “I think that I came across as believable”. A 7 point Likert Scale was used, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The participants were asked to describe the current state of Perceived Performance. A high number on the Likert Scale indicates a high level of perceived performance. The Cronbach’s Alpha was .79.

*Coding the Interviews.* For the coding process, multiple guidelines were established beforehand. Firstly, the type of details were split into two categories. This was done to be able to distinguish accurate and unverified details. The first category consists of the details that were mentioned by participants that were also described in the scenario, and were accurate details. These details will be referred to as Scripted Details. This was to see how many details the participants would mention. The second category consists of the details that participants added to the account. These details were not mentioned anywhere in the scenarios and thus were unverified. Therefore, this type of details will be referred to as Unscripted Details. These details were important to distinguish from the details that were provided in the script. If participants recalled unscripted details, it would make a stronger case for the hypothesized increase in information yield for the humanistic approach. We will also look into the combined total details that are provided by participants.

Furthermore, the coding had to be very precise in regards to counting only factual information that could be verified. This requirement was for both scripted and unscripted details. This means that only concrete actions or physical characteristics were counted. Thoughts or intentions were left out of the count. For example, a participant might recount having walked to the counter. However, many participants would express the intention to walk to the counter. This last instance would not be included in the count, as it is not a detail that can be fact-checked.

Finally, there were some pieces of information that consisted of multiple smaller parts. An example is that of the description of the other lady in the store. She was wearing a pencil skirt, a blue blouse, and silver jewelry. These three smaller pieces of information would count as one detail. So if participants mentioned all three, it would add three details to the total.

### **Procedure**

The program Skype was used to conduct the interviews. Due to the Coronavirus, this was the only possibility to perform the experiment. All of the data was collected this way. The interviews were recorded, and downloaded from Skype.

A day in advance, one of the researchers would send the participants the scenario that had to be prepared, as well as their individual participant number and the link to the Skype call. Participants were randomly sent either the innocent or guilty scenario. This was determined according to a schedule of random allocation developed in Excel before the data collection. The interviewer would be told which interview style to use by the other researcher. However, the interviewer would not be aware of the guilt or innocence of the interviewee.

Then, at the interview itself, one of the researchers would welcome the participant in the Skype call. This researcher would give an explanation of the experimental procedure, and ask if the participant had any questions, clarify instructions. Inform the participant of their right to withdraw at any moment, and confirm consent. The participant would then receive the link for the pre-interview questionnaire. The participant would be reminded to try to convince the interviewer that the participant deserved the least amount of punishment, or preferably none at all. The participant was allowed to tell the interviewer anything they wished in order to reach this goal.

After the initial introduction, the researcher would leave the call, and the interviewer would enter the call. Then, the recording would be started, and the interview would begin according to one of the Interview Style scripts.



After the interview, the researcher would join the call again, and the interviewer would leave. Then, the participant would immediately receive the link to the post-interview questionnaire. The researcher then gave participants a full written debrief and answered any questions they may have had. The debrief consisted of an explanation of the goals of the study, as well as a final option for consent.

### **Analysis**

Firstly, all the recordings from the interviews were transcribed verbatim. From these transcripts, the different parts of information and detail provided by the participants was coded. These were then counted per participant. The coding categories were: the number of scripted details, the number of extra details, and the total number of details. This last category is the sum of the number of scripted and extra details.

Finally, the means of the questionnaires were calculated to later be able to perform the analyses. These analyses were performed in the program *Jamovi*, version 1.8.1. A Two-Way ANOVA analysis was used on the data with Interview Style and the Suspect guilt as independent variables in each analysis. The dependent variables were the Amount of Information provided, the Amount of Novel Information provided, and the Total Amount of Information provided, which combined the scripted and unscripted information provided. The other dependent variables were Rapport, the Perceived Risk Likelihood, the Perceived Risk Severity, Anxiety, and Perceived Performance. To investigate some results further, an Independent Samples T-test was performed to see which groups specifically had a different influence. This was an exploratory analysis. Only the significant results are reported and no correction for multiple tested was applied. Finally, correlation analyses were performed to examine any interrelationships between the variables.

## Results

Descriptive statistics for all the scales are provided in Table 1. The Rapport scale, Perceived Risk Likelihood and Severity scales, the Anxiety scale, Number of Scripted Details and Total Number of Details measures were all normally distributed. The only scale without a normal distribution was the Number of Unscripted Details. This scale had a median (IQR) of 2 (1,3).

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for all Dependent Variables*

	Rapport	Perceived Risk Likelihood	Perceived Risk Severity	Perceived Performance	Anxiety	Scripted details	Unscripted details	Total details
<i>N</i>	77	77	77	77	77	77	69*	77
<i>M</i>	3.65	4.10	4.02	4.97	2.22	13.60	2.57	15.90
<i>SD</i>	0.75	0.54	1.05	1.08	0.24	5.29	1.83	5.56
<i>Min</i>	1.19	2.14	1.57	1.75	1.65	5	1	6
<i>Max</i>	4.86	5.43	5.71	6.50	3.10	28	11	29

*Note.* \*The number of participants is lower, because not everyone provided extra details.

To test correlations between the dependent variables, a Pearson’s correlation matrix was used. One correlation that was significant was the correlation between Perceived Performance and the Scripted Details (Table 2). As Perceived Performance increased, the participants also provided more details. No other hypothesised, or unhypothesised relationships were identified.

Two other significant correlations were between the Scripted details and Total details, as well as between the Unscripted details and Total details.

**Table 2**

## Correlation Matrix

		Rapport	Perceived Risk Likelihood	Perceived Risk Severity	Perceived Performance	Anxiety	Scripted details	Unscripted details
Rapport	<i>r</i>	—						
	<i>p</i>	—						
Perceived Risk Likelihood	<i>r</i>	.052	—					
	<i>p</i>	.651	—					
Perceived Risk Severity	<i>r</i>	.002	-.064	—				
	<i>p</i>	.987	.577	—				
Perceived Performance	<i>r</i>	.077	.154	-.111	—			
	<i>p</i>	.504	.181	.335	—			
Anxiety	<i>r</i>	-.075	.035	.054	.173	—		
	<i>p</i>	.518	.762	.641	.132	—		
Scripted details	<i>r</i>	.210	.107	-.018	.250	-.104	—	
	<i>p</i>	.067	.354	.879	<b>.028*</b>	.370	—	
Unscripted details	<i>r</i>	.029	-.058	.127	-.074	-.031	-.070	—
	<i>p</i>	.811	.638	.298	.547	.800	.567	—
Total details	<i>r</i>	.195	.102	.037	.223	-.109	.940	.268
	<i>p</i>	.090	.377	.749	.051	.347	<b>&lt;.001*</b>	<b>.026*</b>

Note. \* Significant correlations

## Hypothesis tests

### *Number of Scripted Details*

Firstly, no significant effect was found for the Humanistic Interview Style or Accusatory Interview Style on the number of Scripted Details provided,  $F(1, 73) = 0.21, p = .647$  ( $M = 13.90, SD = 5.78$  vs.  $M = 13.40, SD = 4.83$ ). There was an effect of Suspect Guilt or Non-Guilt on the number of Scripted Details provided, with innocent suspects giving more details than guilty suspects,  $F(1, 73) = 3.53, p = .064$ , ( $M = 12.60, SD = 4.70$  vs.  $M = 14.80, SD = 5.71$ ). However, this was not quite statistically significant.

When looking into the interaction effect of both Suspect Guilt and Interview Style on the Scripted Details, no significant effect was found,  $F(1, 73) = 1.58, p = .212$  (Figure 1). However, when investigating this interaction further with exploratory t-tests, there is a result that shows significance. An Independent Samples t-test shows that there is a significant difference between Guilty and Non-Guilty suspects when interviewed in the Humanistic style,  $p = .045$  ( $M = 12.10, SD = 4.95$  vs.  $M = 15.80, SD = 6.13$ ). Non-Guilty participants provided more details than Guilty participants for this particular interview style. No other comparison was found to be significant.

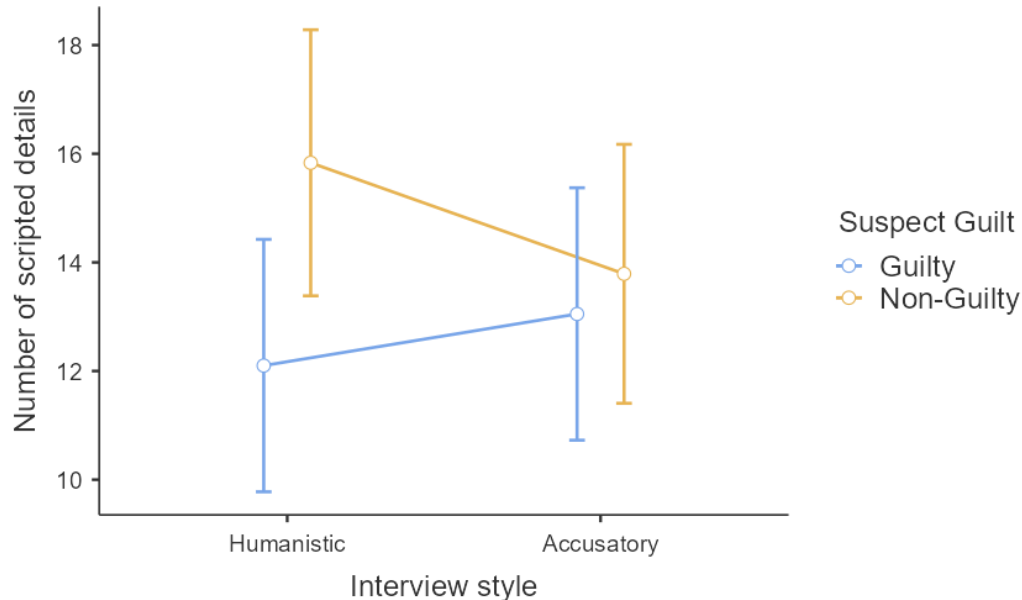


Figure 1. Comparison Between Interview Style and Suspect Guilt for Number of Scripted Details.

### ***Number of Unscripted Details***

Interview Style did not have a significant effect on the number of Unscripted Details provided,  $F(1, 65) = 0.27, p = .599$ . The number of Unscripted Details provided was similar in Humanistic Interviews ( $M = 2.44, SD = 1.34$ ) and Accusatory Interviews ( $M = 2.70, SD = 2.26$ ). However, Suspect Guilt did have a significant effect,  $F(1, 65) = 7.21, p = .009$ , for Guilt and Non-Guilt, with guilty suspects providing more additional details than innocent suspects ( $M = 3.06, SD = 2.08$  vs  $M = 2.03, SD = 1.33$ ). This finding suggests that guilty suspects give additional details, while innocent suspects tend to keep their account simple and shorter. There was also a significant result for the combined effect of suspect guilt and interview style,  $F(1, 65) = 9.51, p = .003$ . This interaction effect is illustrated in Figure 2.

To investigate this interaction effect further, the differences between the Interview Styles and Suspect Guilt have been examined via a test of simple effects has been performed. Figure 2 and an Independent Samples t-test show that Guilty suspects provided more unscripted details when interviewed in an accusatory style than when interviewed with a humanistic style,  $p = .034$  ( $M = 3.82, SD = 2.63$  vs.  $M = 2.37, SD = 1.12$ ). Also, Guilty suspects provided more unscripted details than Non-Guilty suspects when interviewed with the accusatory style,  $p = .002$  ( $M = 3.82, SD = 2.63$  vs.  $M = 1.50, SD = 0.73$ ). There is a significant higher amount of unscripted details for the Humanistic approach compared to the Accusatory approach, but only for the Non-Guilty participants,  $p = .024$  ( $M = 2.53, SD = 1.59$  vs  $M = 1.50, SD = 0.73$ ). There was no significant effect for the Guilty or Non-Guilty participants on the amount of unscripted details in the humanistic interview style.

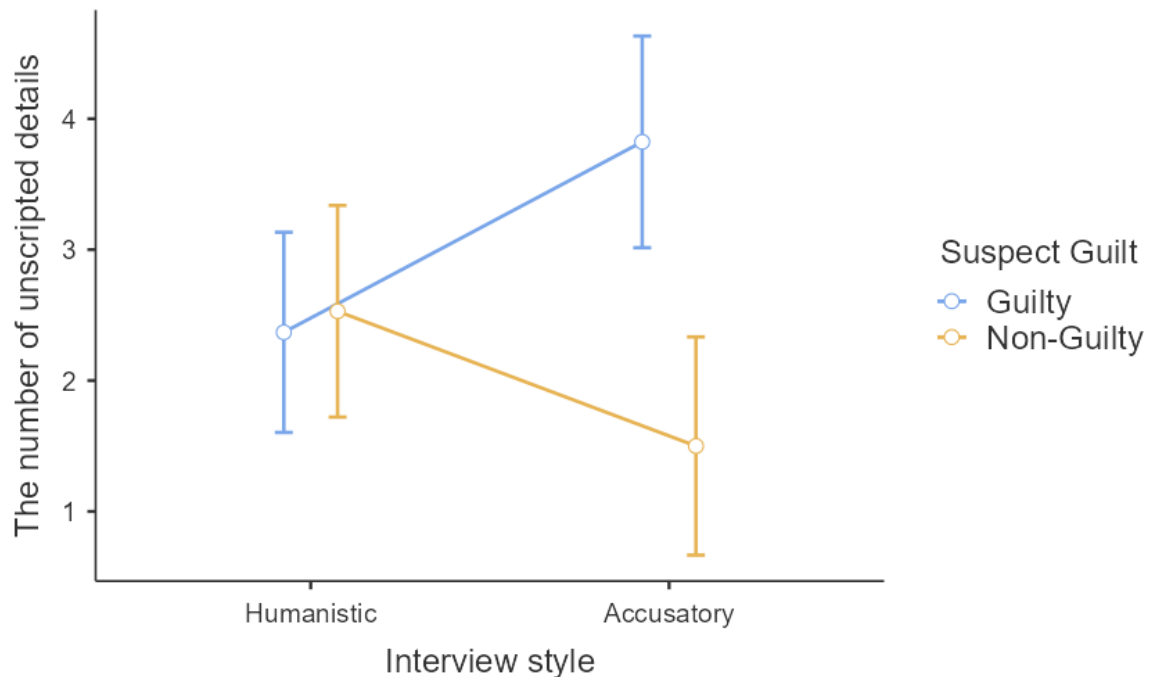


Figure 2. Comparison Between Interview Style and Suspect Guilt for Number of Unscripted Details.

### **Total Number of Details**

Finally, the effect on the total number of details has been calculated. There was no significant effect of Humanistic or Accusatory Interview Style on its own,  $F(1, 73) = 0.25, p = .613$  ( $M = 16.20, SD = 5.79$  vs  $M = 15.70, SD = 5.39$ ), as well as for Suspect Guilt or Non-Guilt,  $F(1, 73) = 1.14, p = .288$  ( $M = 15.30, SD = 5.71$  vs  $M = 16.60, SD = 5.39$ ). Only the combined effect of Interview Style and Suspect Guilt seemed to have a significant effect on the total number of details,  $F(1, 73) = 4.11, p = .046$ . To investigate this effect further, a test of simple effect has been performed. The visualization can be seen in Figure 3. Figure 3 and the Independent Samples T-tests show that total number of details is lower for guilty compared to non-guilty suspects when interviewed in the Humanistic Interview Style,  $p = .038$  ( $M = 14.30, SD = 5.57$  vs  $M = 18.20, SD = 5.48$ ). There were no other significant results found for the rest of the comparisons.

Combined, the three analyses for the Scripted, Unscripted, and Total Amount of Details show that humanistic interviews help increase the amount of scripted, or accurate details from innocent suspects. There is a similar amount of unscripted details provided by both guilty and innocent suspects. In contrast, the accusatory approach leads to a decrease in unscripted details from innocent suspects. Like the humanistic approach, the amount of accurate details provided

by innocent and guilty suspects is similar. However, the accusatory approach also leads to guilty suspects providing more unscripted details.



Figure 3. Comparison Between Interview Styles and Suspect Guilt for Total Number of Details.

### **Rapport**

No significant effect was found of the Humanistic or Accusatory Interview Style on Rapport,  $F(1, 73) = 2.88, p = .094$  ( $M = 3.80, SD = 0.76$  vs  $M = 3.51, SD = 0.73$ ). Also, no significant effect was found of Suspect Guilt or Non-Guilt on Rapport,  $F(1, 73) = 0.03, p = .852$  ( $M = 3.67, SD = 0.60$  vs  $M = 3.95, SD = 0.90$ ). There was also no significant interaction effect of Interview Style and Suspect Guilt on Rapport,  $F(1, 73) = 0.06, p = 0.80$ .

### **Perceived Risk**

**Likelihood.** No significant effects were found when analyzing the Perceived Risk Likelihood Scale. The Humanistic or Accusatory Interview Style did not differ in terms of perceived Likelihood,  $F(1, 73) = 0.18, p = .668$  ( $M = 4.07, SD = 0.53$  vs  $M = 4.13, SD = 0.56$ ). Suspect Guilt and Non-Guilt also had no significant effect on Likelihood,  $F(1, 73) = 0.05, p = .814$  ( $M = 4.09, SD = 0.59$  vs  $M = 4.12, SD = 0.50$ ).

We also looked into the interaction effect of Interview Style and Suspect Guilt. There were no significant results found for the Perceived Risk Likelihood,  $F(1, 73) = 0.003, p = .950$ .

**Severity.** No significant effects were found of the Humanistic or Accusatory Interview Style for the Severity scale,  $F(1, 73) = 0.05, p = .812$  ( $M = 3.99, SD = 1.07$  vs  $M = 4.05, SD = 1.04$ ). Suspect Guilt and Non-Guilt also had no significant effect,  $F(1, 73) = 1.98, p = 0.163$  ( $M = 3.86, SD = 1.03$  vs  $M = 4.20, SD = 1.06$ ).

There were no significant interaction effect of Interview Style and Suspect Guilt on Perceived Risk Severity,  $F(1, 73) = 0.12, p = .72$ .

### **Anxiety**

Anxiety was also not found to be significantly influenced by the Humanistic or Accusatory Interview Style,  $F(1, 73) = 2.1, p = 0.151$  ( $M = 2.26, SD = 0.25$  vs  $M = 2.18, SD = 0.24$ ) or Suspect Guilt or Non-Guilt,  $F(1, 73) = 0.29, p = 0.588$  ( $M = 2.21, SD = 0.26$  vs  $M = 2.24, SD = 0.22$ ).

There were no significant results when investigating the interaction effect of Interview Style and Suspect Guilt on Anxiety,  $F(1, 73) = 0.61, p = .43$ .

### **Perceived Performance**

Finally, there was no effect of Interview Style on Perceived Performance. The mean Perceived Performance was the same in both Humanistic and Accusatory Interview Styles,  $F(1, 73) = 0.13, p = 0.719$  ( $M = 4.91, SD = 1.23$  vs  $M = 5.03, SD = 0.91$ ) and in the Suspect Guilt and Non-Guilt,  $F(1, 73) = 2.59, p = 0.111$  ( $M = 4.79, SD = 1.04$  vs  $M = 5.17, SD = 1.09$ ). When combined, the two did have a significant effect on the mean of perceived performance,  $F(1, 73) = 4.13, p = .046$ .

In order to understand the interaction effect of Interview Style and Suspect Guilt, a test of simple effects has been performed. Also, a figure to illustrate this can be seen in Figure 8. Figure 4 and the Independent Samples t-tests show that Non-Guilty participants had a higher Perceived Performance compared to Guilty participants within the humanistic style,  $p = .027$  ( $M = 5.83, SD = 1.11$  vs.  $M = 4.50, SD = 1.22$ ). No other comparisons were significant.



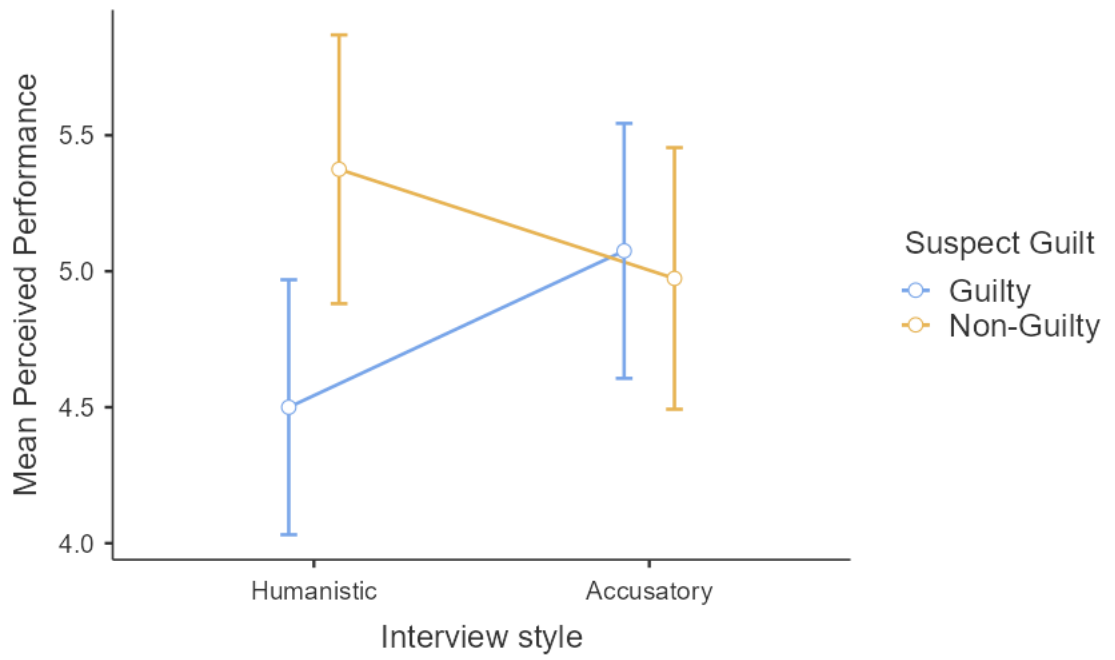


Figure 4. Comparison Between Interview Style and Suspect Guilt for Perceived Performance

## *Summary of Results*

Hypothesis	Confirmed?	Extra information
There is a significant larger Number of Details disclosed in the Humanistic interview style compared to the Accusatory interview style.	Partly	In general, non-guilty participants provide more information in the humanistic interview style than guilty participants. Guilty participants provide more unscripted details for the accusatory style than non-guilty participants.
There is a significant higher level of Rapport for the Humanistic interview style compared to the Accusatory interview style. There is a positive correlation between rapport and information provision.	No	
There is a significant lower level of Perceived Risk for the Humanistic interview style compared to the Accusatory interview style. There is a negative correlation between Perceived Risk and information provision.	No	
There is a significant lower level of Anxiety for the Humanistic interview style compared to the Accusatory interview style. There is a negative correlation between anxiety and information provision.	No	
There is a significant higher level of Perceived Performance for the Humanistic interview style compared to the Accusatory interview style. There is a positive correlation between Perceived Performance and information provision	Yes	For the humanistic style, non-guilty participants had a higher perceived performance than guilty participants.

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## Discussion

The results show that humanistic interviews have the effect of increasing the scripted and total information yield from non-guilty suspects. Non-guilty suspects also provided more unscripted information in the humanistic setting compared to the accusatory setting. The accusatory interviews have the effect of increasing the unscripted details from guilty suspects. Guilty suspects also provide more unscripted details in the accusatory style compared to the humanistic style.

Perceived performance was higher for non-guilty suspects than guilty suspects when interviewed in the humanistic style. However, no significant effects were found when investigating rapport, nor for the perceived risk likelihood or severity. Anxiety also showed no significant results.

### Information provision

The scripted number of details for non-guilty participants was higher compared to guilty suspects for the humanistic interview style. This is in contrast with the hypothesis that suspects, regardless of guilt or innocence, would provide more information in the humanistic style. We also found that guilty suspects were shown to provide more unscripted details when interviewed in the accusatory style compared to the humanistic style. Guilty suspects also provided more unscripted details compared to non-guilty suspects when interviewed with the accusatory style. This finding indicates that accusatory interviews can increase disclosure from guilty suspects compared to innocent suspects. This is an interesting find, because it was hypothesized that the accusatory interview would lead to suspects sharing less information. We predicted that, due to the additional pressure, perceived risk, and possible rise in anxiety we expected accusatory interviews to cause, suspects would be less inclined to share (Luke & Alceste, 2020). Therefore, the first hypothesis seems to have been falsified. However, it is important to note that accusatory and guilty participants only provided additional unscripted details, not additional accurate details. Guilty participants were probably more inclined to use unscripted details to help explain their behavior (Hartwig, Granhag, & Strömwall, 2007). When confronted with evidence after the free recall, some participants had left out some information or had said something that was in contract with the evidence. It is likely that these participants tried to avoid mentioning information, or tried to contradict any evidence presented. This would have required these participants to stray from the script and come up with alternative explanations. In contrast, non-guilty participants were able to use the script most of the time, since there was no reason to lie.

It is possible that guilty participants felt the need to address the accusations made by the interviewer. Innocent participants could have assumed that the facts would eventually exonerate them (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). This is due to innocent suspects believing that their innocence should be visible (Hartwig, Granhag, & Strömwall, 2007). Hartwig, Granhag, and Strömwall explain that innocent suspects typically have a belief in a just world. This means that innocent suspects believe that their innocence will be proven, because it is fair for that to happen. Therefore, suspects can provide more information, also when it is not necessarily in their favor.

There was also an interaction effect of both interview style and suspect guilt on the total number of details. When suspects were interviewed with the humanistic style, non-guilty suspects were shown to provide more information in total compared to guilty suspects. This is partly in line with earlier findings that the humanistic approach leads to a higher information yield (Kim et al., 2020; Vrij et al., 2006). However, this is not the case for guilty suspects. It was expected that guilty suspects would also provide more information. This is an interesting finding. It could be that guilty suspects, feeling less pressure compared to the accusatory approach, feel that it is in their best interest to withhold information. Guilty people are generally not inclined to share information, because there is a risk in sharing too many accurate details that could lead the interviewer to find out they are tied to the crime (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). Furthermore, it could be the case that the humanistic approach helps make it easier for innocent people to provide accurate details (Brimbal et al., 2019). It was found that making use of humanistic interview styles can help increase the information yield, as well as making it easier for the interviewee to recall information (Abbe & Brandon, 2013; Gabbert et al., 2020).

There have been some interesting findings on the differences in information disclosure depending on guilt and interview style. The accusatory style helps increase unscripted details provided by guilty suspects. This can lead to new evidence being presented that can be verified. For innocent suspects, the accusatory and humanistic approach seem to be equally effective. It is important to note, that the accusatory mock interview is far removed from an actual accusatory interview. Therefore, it could be the case that the accusatory aspect of the interview was not impactful enough to make a large difference. Additionally, there has been a lack of correlations between information yield and other expected variables. The only correlation found was between the scripted details, unscripted details and the total details. However, this correlation does not hold much meaning, as the total details is the sum of both the scripted and unscripted details.

## **Rapport**

Whereas it was hypothesized that rapport would increase for the humanistic approach, and decrease for the accusatory approach, there was no strong significance in the result found.

It is a possibility that participants did not identify with some questions on the rapport scale. The questions regarding cultural similarity were confusing to some participants. These included the questions: “The Interviewer and I have our culture in common”, “The Interviewer and I probably share the same ethnicity”, and “The Interviewer probably shares my culture”. It is possible that participants did respond well to the rapport building, but did not understand these questions or perhaps did not value the questions very highly. The results on rapport were close to significant. This might be an explanation for it not being completely significant.

## **Perceived Risk**

There was no significant difference found in perceived risk. It was expected that the accusatory approach would lead to an increase in perceived risk, and the humanistic approach would lead to a decrease in perceived risk. This is because when the maximization tactic is used, it is expected to cause a suspect to expect a more severe punishment (Luke & Alceste, 2020). Furthermore, it was expected that it would also increase the perceived likelihood of being found guilty. It was theorized that using the maximization tactic would lead to a higher perceived risk.

A possible explanation might be that participants did not take the interviewers behavior as an indicator for their risk. Perhaps only the evidence presented to them influenced the perceived risk. The evidence in both conditions was not conclusive. Therefore, participants could have felt that the evidence was not strong enough to be found guilty and to receive a severe punishment. This might explain why the perceived risk was lower than hypothesized.

## **Anxiety**

Despite the expectation that levels of anxiety would be lower for the humanistic approach compared to the accusatory approach, no significant difference was found. Since the accusatory approach makes use of exaggerations of evidence, punishment, and severity of the crime, it was expected that anxiety would increase (Leo, 2020; Luke & Alceste, 2020; May et al., 2020).

An explanation could be that both interview styles led to equal amount of anxiety, due to the nature of police interviews. These interviews could lead to stress, regardless of the interview style (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). A guilty suspect could fear that the interviewer finds out the information from said suspect. An innocent suspect can fear that they are not able

to share all the important details that can prove their innocence. In both cases, there is a threat that the suspect will be convicted.

Contrastingly, it could be that the stakes for the experiment were too low, resulting in a lower feeling of anxiety. This would be a more logical explanation, since the mean scores for anxiety were low.

### **Perceived Performance**

An interaction effect was found of both interview style and suspect guilt on the perceived performance. It was found that, when interviewed in the humanistic style, non-guilty suspects had a higher perceived performance compared to guilty suspects. It was initially expected that the perceived performance would be higher for guilty suspects in the humanistic condition as well. Due to the maximization technique used in the accusatory approach, it was expected that the suspect would feel the performance was less successful. This was due to the interviewer consistently expressing that they expect the suspect to be guilty (Leo, 2020). It was expressed by the interviewer that there was an absolute certainty that the suspect was guilty. However, the humanistic approach did not make use of any such tactic. Therefore, it is surprising that guilty suspects had a lower perceived performance compared to innocent suspects. This might be due to the questions in the humanistic style being worded slightly differently to appear more friendly. This invites suspects to share their account in full, without being led in a certain direction by the interviewer. It could be the case that this makes it difficult for a guilty suspect to stick to a certain strategy (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). Oftentimes, a guilty suspect will try to withhold incriminating information. Especially when asked a direct question, it makes it easier for guilty suspects to stick to the strategy of denying any involvement. However, with the humanistic interview, the questions are not as direct. This makes it more difficult for guilty suspects to simply deny or withhold information. Another perspective is that guilty suspects have the added pressure of having to make up a story. The task for guilty participants is kept unclear, because the participants is not aware of what the interviewer knows at the start of the interview. Therefore, it is not clear what is safe to share with the interviewer and what is not. This makes it more difficult for the participants to estimate if their performance was good, which can be the reason for guilty suspects to have a lower perceived performance. In contrast, non-guilty suspects might like the freedom that the humanistic interview style gives them. It is encouraged to share as much information as possible. The task of sharing information is made very clear, and the environment in which

suspects can do that is provided with the humanistic interview style. This can help increase the perceived performance of innocent suspects.

Furthermore, it was found that there was no significant difference between guilty and innocent suspects for the accusatory interview style. Both groups had a similar perceived performance. It could be argued that, in contrast to the humanistic style, innocent suspects are not able to share as much information due to the direct nature of the questions, as well as the assumption of guilt. The constant accusations of guilt could also lead to insecurity in innocent suspects that the information provided will convince the interviewer of their innocence. This last explanation might also be the same for guilty suspects. The accusations despite previous answers or explanations given by the suspect, could lead to a lower perceived performance in guilty suspects as well. Both guilty and innocent suspects get the same feedback during the interview, regardless of their actual guilt or innocence. This may explain the similarity in perceived performance for the accusatory interview style.

This reasoning can help argue that perceived performance might just be a result, instead of an influencing factor in information provision. Participants could rate their performance on how much information they were able to provide, or could withhold and deny. Innocent suspects could have a higher perceived performance in the humanistic interview, simply because they were able to share more information. Guilty suspects might have a lower perceived performance for the humanistic interview style, because it is not clear what they can and cannot share. This makes it difficult to use a certain strategy to convince the interviewer of their innocence. For the accusatory interview, both guilty and innocent suspects are not able to share much information due to the constant accusations. Because of this, innocent suspects have a lower perceived performance. However, guilty participants have an increased perceived performance in comparison to the humanistic interview style. This is because it is made easier to deny any accusations made and withhold information.

### **Limitations**

A more realistic interview could have given better insight in the different interview styles. Had it been a possibility to ask follow-up questions that were not in the script, the interview styles could have had a larger impact. This might have given a better view into the more subtle differences between the humanistic and accusatory styles. For the humanistic interview, the script did not provide any room for responses to the answers given. Therefore, the interviewer did not show much understanding or encouragement to the participants. This lack of feedback could have diminished, for example, any rapport building. The accusatory

interview script also had no room for feedback. Usually, accusatory interviews are enacted in such a way that suspects will be put under immense pressure. Had there been space for responses such as “I know you’re lying, just tell me the truth”, it could have achieved that pressure better.

However, this was not done to ensure the interviews would be as similar as possible, as well as keep the interviews quite simple. This choice was made to be sure that there could be no influence from the different interviewers or even different interviews on the dependent variables. Furthermore, this makes it possible for other researchers to replicate our study more easily, since the script of the interview is already developed.

Furthermore, the perceived risk scale as well as the perceived performance scale were not validated. It could very well be the case that some questions were not effective at measuring either perceived risk or perceived performance. Therefore, it is important to validate these scales before further use. A test with a group of participants could be conducted, in which each item on the questionnaire is investigated for its effectiveness of measuring what is intended. Any floor effects or ceiling effects could indicate that an item should be changed or removed altogether. Also, any feedback from participants about the questions or any misunderstandings can be brought to light.

A strength of this study, is that the person interviewing the participants was ensured to be unaware of the participants guilt of innocence. This was done to prevent any bias from the interviewer towards the participants. This way, the interview styles were used as realistically as possible.

Finally, it is an advantage that all the interviews were held via Skype, instead of face to face. In an increasingly digital world, as well as having to make adaptations to COVID-19, it creates a good impression of the workings of a digital police interview and the possibilities, as well as limitations.

## **Conclusion**

This study was conducted to learn which interview style, the humanistic or the accusatory, would help increase information yield. It was found that the humanistic and accusatory interview styles increase the information yield for different types of details. The humanistic style helped increase the scripted amount of details for only innocent suspects, whereas the accusatory style increased the unscripted amount of details for only guilty suspects.

This leads to the idea that innocent suspects try to give as much detail as possible in the humanistic setting, but do not embellish their accounts as much as guilty suspects would do in



accusatory interviews. We theorize that this means that innocent suspects want to give as much information as possible to ensure their innocence will be proven in humanistic interviews. However, innocent suspects do not feel the need to explain away certain events, as they could be convinced that simply telling the truth will show their innocence. For the accusatory interviews, innocent suspects are not given much room to provide information. With the added pressure and accusations, innocent suspects might feel unsafe to share many details.

We also theorize that guilty suspects might feel the pressure to fill the gaps in a story, as well as explain any irregularities found in their account due to the pressure of the accusatory interview style. This could lead to guilty suspects making up details, which run the risk of being inaccurate. Furthermore, guilty suspects could also want to leave out any incriminating information, which could explain the lesser amount of scripted details provided. The humanistic interview style might leave a lot of room for guilty suspects to simply say they do not know something, or do not remember. Therefore, this might explain the decrease in information yield.

These theories need to be researched in the future to help explain the differences in information yield. This study did not find that the variables of rapport, perceived risk, and anxiety could clarify this. Perceived performance did show a significant result. However, it is possible that the perceived performance was a result of information provision, instead of the other way around. Therefore, perceived performance will need to be researched more as well.

This study showed a contradictory finding to much existing research. The accusatory approach did increase information yield, if only from guilty suspects. Yet, it needs to be investigated if the unscripted details provided are reliable to be able to conclude anything. In line with prior research, the humanistic interview style has still been shown to increase the information yield. It needs to be researched if and how this can also be increased for guilty suspects.

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## Appendix 1

### Suspect scenarios

#### *Guilty*

You have been looking for a new wallet for some time now. After a few months of hard work you think you have saved up enough money to start looking for a nice, high quality wallet that will last you for a long time. You look up stores online before you go out shopping to save time. After searching for a while, your eye is caught by a tiny shop that sells only very expensive handbags and wallets. You think it would be worth looking around in there to try to find a new wallet.

Today, however, you dropped your phone and cracked the screen badly enough for it not to be useable anymore. Sadly this means that you have to use a lot of your saved money to get it repaired. You drive to the city and drop your phone off at an electronics shop. When you walk back to your car you notice the small leatherware shop that you saw online. You decide to take a look inside to see if they might have something you like.

As the store is so small, you notice there is only one other customer in the store. You notice that the woman is looking very elegant. She is wearing an obviously expensive blue blouse combined with a pencil skirt and silver jewelry. It makes you feel a little bit uncomfortable, since you are just wearing an old shirt and faded jeans.

You browse the store for a while, and pick up a wallet that you like. It seems to have everything you want. Very soft red leather, enough room to store some money and cards, as well as a little space to put in pictures behind see-through plastic. Sadly the wallet is too expensive to buy right now due to your phone repair and you figure that you probably need to save for another month. When you want to put the wallet away you notice that there is a small stripe-shaped stain on the outside of the wallet, almost as if someone drew on it with a permanent marker. Instead of putting the wallet back you decide to take it to the counter to notify the shop assistant about the damage. While walking there you notice that there is no one behind the counter and that there is also no shop assistant in sight. You look around you and see that the wealthy looking woman is occupied with a purse somewhere in the corner of the store. When the sound of the lady bumping into something makes your heart skip a beat, you quickly put the wallet behind your jacket and without thinking about it anymore you walk out of the store.

A couple of streets away from the leatherware shop you see two police officers. You try to hide how scared you are and you turn your head the other way. While you try to keep walking as normally as possible you can feel your heart beating in your chest. When you see a bin you quickly dispose the wallet there. When you notice that the officers are moving towards you, you freeze. You hear them say “You are under arrest for stealing a wallet”.

You are taken to the police station to be interviewed by the police for suspicion of theft. You immediately start thinking of ways to explain what happened so you do not get in trouble.

## **Suspect Scenario**

### ***Non-Guilty***

Interviewee

You have been looking for a new wallet for some time now. After a few months of hard work you think you have saved up enough money to start looking for a nice, good quality wallet that might last you at least ten years. Since you know that you have a quite expensive taste, you look up stores online before you go out shopping. After searching for a while, your eye is caught by a tiny shop that sells only very expensive handbags and wallets. You think it would be worth looking around in there to try to find a new wallet.

Today, however, you dropped your phone and cracked the screen badly enough for it not to be useable anymore. Sadly this means that you have to use a lot of your saved money to get it repaired. You decide to drive to the city and drop your phone off at an electronics shop. When you walk back to your car you notice the small leatherware shop that you saw online. You decide to take a look inside to see if they might have something you like.

As the store is so small, you notice there is only one other customer in the store. You notice that the woman is looking very elegant. She is wearing an obviously expensive blue blouse combined with a pencil skirt and silver jewelry. It makes you feel a little bit uncomfortable, since you are just wearing an old shirt and faded jeans.

You browse the store for a while, and pick up a wallet that you like. It seems to have everything you want. Very soft feeling red leather, enough room to store some money and cards, as well as a little space to put in pictures behind see-through plastic. Sadly the wallet is too expensive to buy right now due to your phone repair and you figure that you probably need another months savings. When you want to put the wallet away you notice that there is a stain on the outside of the wallet, almost as if someone drew on it with a permanent marker. Instead of putting the wallet back you decide to take it to the counter to notify the shop assistant. While walking there you notice that there is no one behind the counter and that there is also no shop assistant in sight. As you are not sure where you picked the wallet up at first, you leave the wallet somewhere close by. Afterwards, you immediately leave the store. On your way out you hear the woman in the corner bumping into something. You realize it might be a better idea to just look up wallets online and order from the comfort of your home.



A couple of streets away from the leatherware shop you see two police officers. At first, you didn't pay attention and looked the other way. They couldn't possibly be looking for you. But when they came closer, you noticed that they were looking at you and walking straight at you. You froze, and your heart started to thump in your chest. You hear them say: 'You are under arrest for theft!'

Now you are being interviewed by a police officer, but you are not sure what is happening and what you did. Of course, since you don't think you did anything wrong, your goal is to convince that police officer of your innocence.

## Appendix 2

### Script interviewer

#### *Introduction information gathering approach*

Hello, my name is [NAME]. I will be conducting your interview today. May I ask how I can refer to you during this interview?

OK, you can call me [NAME].

Now, to start off this interview, let me inform you of the procedure and rules, okay?

This interview is being recorded for both video and audio. This is just to ensure that we can get an exact record of what is being said.

We will need to transcribe these records as well. So to help with that process afterwards, it would be a great help if we do not interrupt each other. When you speak I will try not to interrupt you, and I hope you will do the same for me.

Despite this, please feel free to ask any questions that may arise, okay? And don't worry if I ask two similar questions, or if I ask you to repeat something. I just want to make sure we get as much information as possible and I want to understand everything that you say here today as best I can.

Now, the reason I'm interviewing you today is to talk about the events that happened regarding a wallet that is missing from a store.

It is important that you tell me everything that you know, no matter how insignificant you think it might be. Please use as much detail as you can and do not edit anything out. I was not there, so I am not aware of everything that has happened. That is why I want to give you a chance to tell me your side of the story.

Do you have any questions so far?

We will begin the interview now.

#### *Interview questions information gathering approach*

- Can you tell me about what you did today, in as much detail as you can?
- When you were in the shop, can you tell me in chronological order what happened from your point of view?

Now I will ask you some more specific questions. It is possible that you have already provided relevant details when answering our earlier questions. If that is the case, please repeat the information so we can be sure we collect as much information as possible.

- We have an eye witness that says you were behaving nervously. Why do you think this eyewitness said that?
- Did you pick up anything while in the store?
- We have evidence suggesting that you picked up a wallet. Can you explain that to me?
- We have security footage that showed us you picked up the wallet. Can you tell me more about that?
- If you do not have the wallet, where do you think it could be now?

Close

Thank you very much. We have all the information we need. I would like to ask you to please stay on call until the researcher joins us.

### *Introduction accusatory approach*

Hi, I'm [NAME] and I am here to talk to you about the wallet that was stolen. I am sure that you stole that wallet. Thefts like this can cause small shop owners a lot of harm. Now, this is a problem as you can probably see. So I hope that you will do the right thing by cooperating and telling me about how you stole the wallet.

### *Interview questions accusatory approach*

- Tell me in as much detail as possible what you did today.
- Tell me in chronological order what happened from your point of view while you were in the shop.

Now I will ask you some more specific questions

- The witness told us you were behaving nervously, so we are sure you were not behaving normally. Can you explain that?
- Do you remember picking anything up?
- We have confirmation that you picked up the wallet. Explain that to me.
- You are on camera picking up the wallet so we know you stole it. This is your chance to do right by the victim and tell us the truth.
- Where is the wallet now?

Close

This is the end of the interview. I would like to ask you to please stay on call until the researcher joins us.

### Appendix 3

#### Questionnaires

##### *Rapport scale*

This questionnaire consists of 21 questions. It measures the connection you felt with the interviewer. The answers range from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Please fill in the questionnaire using the first answer that comes to mind. There is no right or wrong answer, simply answer what you feel.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I think the Interviewer is generally honest with me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. The Interviewer did his/her job with skill during the interview.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. The Interviewer respects my knowledge.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. The Interviewer and I have our culture in common.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. The Interviewer performed expertly during the interview.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I think that the Interviewer can generally be trusted to keep his/her word.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. The Interviewer and I probably share the same ethnicity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. The Interviewer really listened to what I had to say.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I was motivated to perform well during the interview.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I feel I can trust the Interviewer to keep his/her word to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. The Interviewer made an effort to do a good job.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. The Interviewer acted like a professional.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. The Interviewer paid careful attention to my opinion.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. The Interviewer and I got along well during the interview.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. The Interviewer and I worked well together as a team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. The Interviewer probably shares my culture.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. I wanted to do a good job during the interview.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. The Interviewer was attentive to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. Communication went smoothly between the Interviewer and me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. The Interviewer was interested in my point of view.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. I felt committed to accomplishing the goals of the interview.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

***Perceived Risk***

This questionnaire consists of 14 questions. It measures the extent to which your answers during the interview would be likely to directly affect you were you genuinely suspected of the crime. The answers range from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Please fill in the questionnaire using the first answer that comes to mind. There is no right or wrong answer, simply answer what you feel.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I think that I was able to persuade the interviewer that I am not worth continuing to investigate in relation to this crime	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I think that I was able to convince the interviewer that I was not involved in this crime	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I think that it is likely that the interviewer would like to interview me again	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I think the interviewer most likely thinks that I did not commit the crime	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I think that the interviewer thinks I am guilty of the crime	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I think that the interviewer is still suspicious of my guilt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I think that the police would be unlikely to keep investigating me as a suspect after the interview	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I think that the police investigation of this crime is likely to continue to impact my day-to-day life after this interview	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I think that, if the interviewer thinks that I am guilty, the consequences for me will be severe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I think that, if the interviewer thinks I am guilty, I will not be punished strongly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. I am worried about how people I care about will judge me if the police continue to investigate me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I think that my reputation will not be harmed if the police continue to investigate me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I think that a continued police investigation could have a negative effect on my future job prospects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I think the police investigation will have a negative effect on my social life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Reverse coded items: 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14.



## *Anxiety*

**Read each statement and select the appropriate response to indicate how you feel right now, that is, at this very moment. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement but give the answer which seems to describe your present feelings best.**

	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>		
	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Very Much So</b>		
1. I feel calm			1	2	3	4
2. I feel secure			1	2	3	4
3. I feel tense			1	2	3	4
4. I feel strained			1	2	3	4
5. I feel at ease			1	2	3	4
6. I feel upset			1	2	3	4
7. I am presently worrying over possible misfortunes			1	2	3	4
8. I feel satisfied			1	2	3	4
9. I feel frightened			1	2	3	4
10. I feel uncomfortable			1	2	3	4
11. I feel self confident			1	2	3	4
12. I feel nervous			1	2	3	4
13. I feel jittery			1	2	3	4
14. I feel indecisive			1	2	3	4
15. I am relaxed			1	2	3	4
16. I feel content			1	2	3	4
17. I am worried			1	2	3	4
18. I feel confused			1	2	3	4
19. I feel steady			1	2	3	4
20. I feel pleasant			1	2	3	4

Reverse coded items: 1, 2, 5, 8, 11, 15, 16, 19, 20

### *Perceived Performance*

This questionnaire consists of 4 questions about how well you think you performed during the interview. The answers range from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. Please fill in the questionnaire using the first answer that comes to mind. There is no right or wrong answer, simply answer what you feel.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I feel confident about my performance during the interview	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I feel that my performance was convincing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I think that I came across as believable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I think that the interviewer thought I was likeable during the interview	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>