Getting into the minds of suspects:

An examination of their influencing behaviours in investigative interviews

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Abstract

This research explored different behaviours suspects employ to influence the perception of the interviewer in the context of an investigative interview. Specifically, the research examined how suspects' use of behaviours was impacted by evidence disclosure timing and the strength of evidence. The research consisted of a 2x2 between-subjects design using evidence disclosure timing (early versus late) and strength of evidence (weak versus strong) as the independent variables to determine their effect on suspects' use of influencing behaviours in an experimental setting. Participants (N = 101) were assigned to one of four experimental conditions and interviewed online. Transcripts of interviews were coded and analysed using the taxonomy of influencing behaviours developed by Watson et al., (2021). The results of this study identified 15 behaviours suspects employed to influence the perception of the interviewer (as opposed to 18 behaviours from Watson et al., (2021)). Beyond the original taxonomy, this research observed another influencing behaviour, labelled information seeking. The research found that while suspects employed a moderate range of influencing behaviours, there was only a small number of behaviours that were employed by almost all suspects. The results also showed that evidence disclosure timing and strength of evidence had a bearing on the behaviours suspects employed to influence the perception of the interviewer. When weak evidence was presented in the interview, there was a stronger tendency towards instrumental behaviours. Then, suspects employed behaviours which directly dealt with and accounted for the evidence presented. However, when strong evidence was presented in the interview, there was a stronger tendency towards relational behaviours. Then, suspects shifted away from concrete arguments and toward minimisation.

Keywords: investigative interviewing, suspect influencing behaviours, strategic use of evidence (SUE), strength of evidence

Getting into the minds of suspects: An examination of their influencing behaviours in investigative interviews

Investigative interviews are critical to the successful completion of investigations (Vrij, Hope, & Fisher, 2014). There is a lot of research which has focused on how interviewers seek to influence suspects to obtain accurate information (Hartwig et al., 2005; 2006). Fewer research has addressed the behaviours of suspects, although suspects also seek to influence the perception of their interviewer within the interview. This is an important topic because the behaviours which suspects employ can have an impact on how successful investigations are (Hartwig et al., 2005; 2006; Hartwig & Granhag, 2008). Watson, Luther, Jackson, Taylor, and Alison (2021) developed a taxonomy of different behaviours which suspects might expect to change the perception of the interviewer in an investigative interview. Based on the results of their field study, Watson et al., (2021) made proposals for under what kinds of interview contexts suspects might employ different types of influencing behaviours. This study will take some of the proposals from the field study which inspired it, and test these using an experimental design. Specifically, this study will apply more or less pressure on the suspects by varying the evidence strength which the suspects need to explain, and by presenting this evidence at an early or later stage in the interview. This study will test if these different mechanism of increasing pressure on the suspect will change the choice of behaviours suspects employ to influence the interviewer within the investigative interview.

Suspect Influencing Behaviours in Investigative Interviews

Watson et al., (2021) proposed a taxonomy of behaviours suspects employ to influence the perception of the interviewer. For that, Watson et al., (2021) analysed twenty-nine transcripts of

interviews of suspects who were accused of a control and coercion crime (a crime within England and Wales since 2015; “Serious Crime Act”, 2015). Specifically, Watson et al., (2021) identified eighteen discrete suspect behaviours which were sorted into eight overarching categories: denials, rational persuasion, dominance, justifications, trustworthy displays, emotional influences, deflections, and admissions (see Figure 1). These behaviours were mapped onto a two-dimensional grid of influencing techniques: power and interpersonal framing (Watson et al., 2021). The power dimension ranges from low power behaviours which seek to establish affiliation, liking, trust, or rapport, to high power behaviours which seek to assert authority, status, or control, or demand respect. The interpersonal framing dimension ranges from instrumental behaviours that directly address the evidence presented, to relational behaviours that seek to manage the relationship dynamics between the interviewer, accused suspect, alleged victim, and other case-related people (e.g., eyewitnesses, or other potential suspects). Of note, Watson et al., (2021) observed that while suspects employed a wide range of influencing behaviours, there was only a small number of behaviours that were exhaustively employed by almost all suspects. Especially relational behaviours were observed at a particularly high frequency. Accordingly, Watson et al., (2021) observed a complex pattern of behaviours that were enacted by suspects in an attempt to bias the perception the interviewer has of the accused suspect, alleged victim, other potentially case-related people, and the evidence which was presented in the interview.

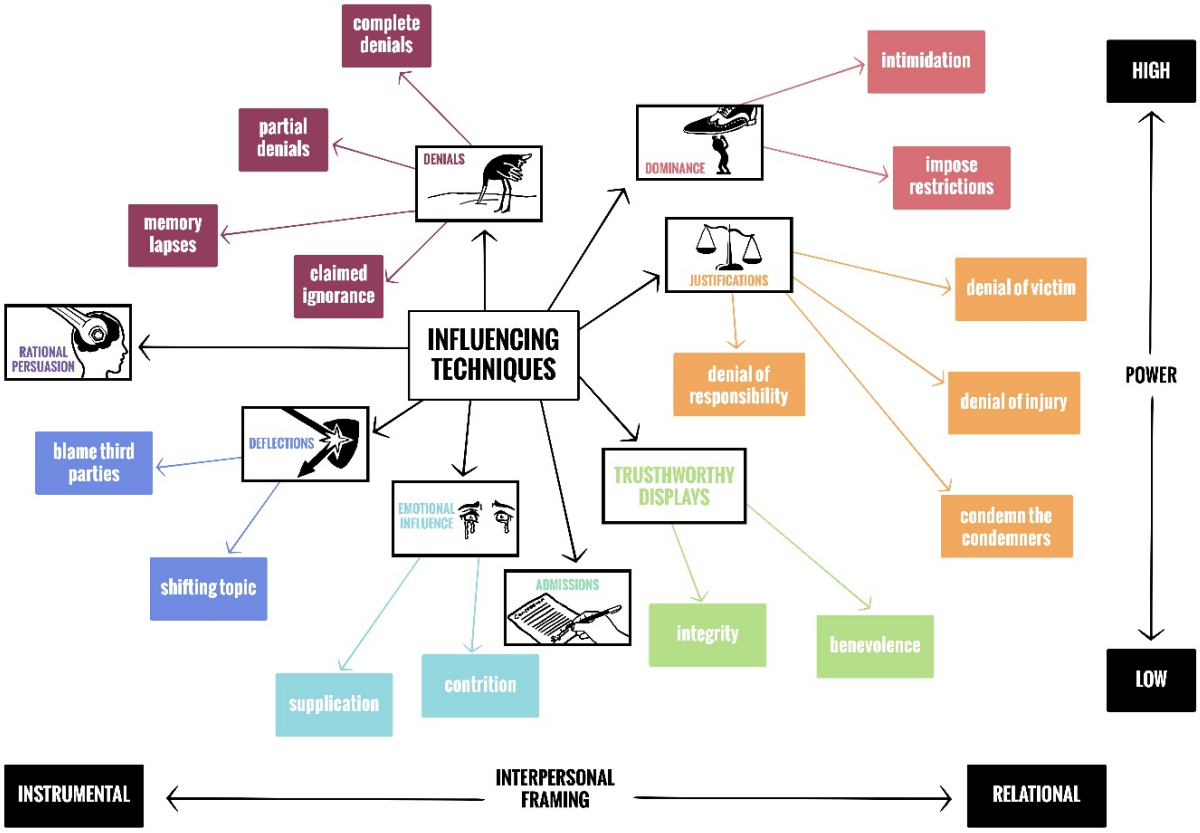

Figure 1. Illustrative map of influence techniques alongside dimensions of power and interpersonal framing (Watson et al., 2021). Figure 1 was originally illustrated by Rebecca Stevens (Lancaster University).

The Taxonomy of Suspect Behaviours

This section presents the foundation of this research's approach of examining suspects' attempts to influence the perception of the interviewer within an investigative interview. To understand suspects' attempts to influence, each behaviour listed in the taxonomy developed by Watson et al., (2021) is first briefly described below.

Denials

Watson et al., (2021) argued that suspects might try to influence the perception of the interviewer through different types of denials. First, suspects might try to influence the perception of the interviewer by completely denying all aspects of the allegation. Furthermore, suspects might try to influence the perception of the interviewer by partially denying some aspects of an allegation while admitting to other aspects of the accusation. Suspects also might try to influence the perception of the interviewer through memory lapses by asserting to be, or genuinely are, unable to recall any information in relation to an allegation or piece of evidence. Lastly, suspects might try to influence the perception of the interviewer through claimed ignorance by asserting to have no knowledge or memory recollection of information in relation to an allegation or piece of evidence (Watson et al., 2021).

Rational Persuasion

Watson et al., (2021) proposed that suspects might try to influence the perception of the interviewer by offering rational and logical arguments, perhaps an alibi, for some or all aspects of the allegation.

Dominance

Suspects might try to influence the perception of the interviewer through displays of dominance (Watson et al., 2021). Specifically, suspects might try to display dominance through intimidation, which can include derogatory comments, ridiculing, threatening, or belittling the questioning process. Watson et al., (2021) noted that suspects might display intimidation in an attempt to assert their authority over the interviewer or take charge of the interview's direction and content. Furthermore, suspects might also try to display dominance by imposing restrictions (Watson et al., 2021). That is, suspects might threaten to use or make use of their right to remain

silent or their right to an attorney to warn the interviewer about pushing too far during the questioning process.

Justifications

Watson et al., (2021) proposed that suspects might try to influence the perception of the interviewer through justifications, which are based on the techniques of neutralizations that were originally introduced by Sykes and Matza (1964). In their research, Sykes and Matza (1964) found that juvenile delinquents utilise these techniques to justify their unlawful actions themselves. Specifically, delinquents employ these techniques before committing the criminal offense, to neutralize unlawful actions and thus reduce their own feelings of guilt, as well as after the criminal offense, to reduce their feelings of self-blame (Sykes & Matza, 1964). In this regard, Watson et al., (2021) found that suspects also employ these techniques to justify their unlawful actions to others, and thereby try to diminish the impact or reframe the interviewer's perception of pertinent details or other case-related people. First, Watson et al., (2021) observed that suspects might try to justify their unlawful actions by denying their responsibility for the criminal offense. That is, suspects might ascribe responsibility for their unlawful actions to forces outside of their personal control, such mental health problems, or addiction. Furthermore, suspects might attempt to justify their unlawful actions by denying the victim. That is, suspects might distort their unlawful actions by transforming the victim into a person who somehow deserved to be punished or harmed by the suspect. In addition, suspects might attempt to justify their unlawful actions by denying the injury. That is, suspects might insist that their unlawful actions did not cause any damage or that the damage is less serious than alleged. Lastly, Watson et al., (2021) suggested that suspects might try to justify their unlawful actions by condemning the condemners. That is, suspects shift the focus

of attention from their own unlawful actions to the questionable motives of those that criticise and condemn them for these actions.

Trustworthy Displays

Watson et al., (2021) observed that suspects might also try to influence the perception of the interviewer through displays of trustworthiness. Suspects might display trustworthiness by demonstrating their integrity. Here, suspects try to signal that the suspect is an honest person and accordingly would not attempt to deceive the interviewer. Closely related, suspects might also display trustworthiness through demonstrations of benevolence. That is, suspects try to signal that the suspect is a good and decent person, who would not, or would not usually, engage in the unlawful actions which they are under suspicion of (Watson et al., 2021).

Emotional Influence

Watson et al., (2021) proposed that suspects might try to emotionally influence the perception of the interviewer through supplication. Specifically, suspects might try to signal to the interviewer that the suspect is weak, vulnerable, or helpless. Watson et al., (2021) noted that suspects employ supplication to communicate dependency and a need for help in their relationship and thus elicit a compassionate and empathetic response from the interviewer. Furthermore, suspects might also try to emotionally influence the interviewer through contrition by claiming to feel, or truly feel, remorseful for their unlawful actions. Specifically, suspects might offer an apology to signal regret for their unlawful actions.

Deflections

Watson et al., (2021) proposed that suspects might try to influence the perception of the interviewer through deflections. Specifically, suspects might deflect blame by apportioning the responsibility for the unlawful actions to third party besides the victim or the suspect. In addition,

suspects might deflect by shifting the topic. Instead of disclosing case-related information, suspects might answer questions other than the ones posed or else wander from the point of discussion (Watson et al., 2021).

Admissions

Watson et al., (2021) proposed that suspects might try to influence the perception of the interviewer by admitting to some or all aspects of an allegation. Specifically, suspects tended to admit to a minor part of the allegation, but then largely reject the more serious part of the accusation.

Suspects Use of Influencing Behaviours Depending on the Interview Context

Based on the results of their field study, Watson et al.,'s (2021) proposed that the behaviours suspects employ to influence the perception of the interviewer might depend on the context of the interview. The present research examines evidence disclosure strategies and strength of evidence as ways of deliberately manipulating the interview context to test some of these ideas.

Evidence Disclosure Strategies

In an investigative interview, the interviewer typically holds some incriminating evidence implicating the suspect in the criminal offense and uses this evidence during the interview. There are typically two timepoints to disclose evidence: at the beginning of the interview (i.e., early disclosure) and later in the interview (i.e., Strategic Use of Evidence technique, SUE, Hartwig et al., 2005). Early disclosure is a method of non-strategically using evidence (Hartwig et al., 2005). In such an interview, the interviewer begins by immediately presenting the suspect with all the evidence that is implicating them in the crime. By disclosing evidence early, the suspect is offered

an opportunity to fabricate a coherent and logical story that incorporates and accounts for the evidence presented. Here, guilty suspects, knowing which evidence the interviewer possesses, will typically not contradict the evidence presented, instead the suspect will make the case-specific information less useful by simply offering a logical and rational explanation for the evidence held by the interviewer (Hartwig et al., 2005). Specifically, Hartwig et al., (2005) indicated that guilty suspects tend to adapt to the interviewer's knowledge when evidence is presented early on in the interview.

Late disclosure, by contrast, is a method of strategically using evidence (SUE, Hartwig et al., 2005). The Strategic Use of Evidence technique (SUE) posits an empirically established method to present evidence to a suspect to draw out cues to deception and truth (Granhag & Hartwig, 2015). The technique rests on the assumption that guilty suspects (i.e., liars) and innocent suspects (i.e., truth-tellers) employ different strategies in their attempts to persuade the interviewer of their innocence (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). In particular, the interviewer can use the evidence strategically to magnify this difference. In such an interview, the interviewer begins by obtaining a full account from the suspect (Hartwig et al., 2005). Characteristic of late disclosure is that interviewers strategically retain the evidence from the suspect until later in the interview (Hartwig et al., 2005). It is a strategy that allows interviewers to exhaust the suspect's possible explanations for the evidence without presenting the evidence itself (Granhag & Vrij, 2010; Tekin, 2016). By holding back the evidence, interviewers can keep the suspect unaware of the evidence they potentially possess. Hartwig et al., (2005) proposed that the interviewer's strategy will induce suspects to underestimate the amount of evidence which the interviewer possesses. In turn, guilty suspects tend to withhold any critical information which may seem incriminating (Hartwig et al., 2005; Hartwig, Granhag, & Strömwall, 2007). However, by the time when the evidence is

presented in the interview, guilty suspects, without knowing what evidence the interviewer held, will have typically not accounted for or outright contradicted the evidence (Hartwig et al., 2005). Simply put, the suspect's account would then be less consistent with the evidence (i.e., there will be statement-evidence inconsistencies; Clemens, Granhag, & Strömwall, 2011; Hartwig et al., 2005). This highlights that guilty suspects not only adapt their strategies to concrete evidence presented by the interviewer, but also to the sheer possibility that the interviewer could hold evidence (Luke, Dawson, Hartwig, & Granhag, 2014). Then, when suspects become aware that their story contradicts the evidence, guilty suspects might feel compelled to change from being less forthcoming to being more forthcoming with information to explain away the evidence (Granhag & Hartwig, 2015; Luke et al., 2014).

Suspects Use Of Influencing Behaviours Depending On When Evidence Is Presented In The Interview

The preceding sections presented the foundation of this research's approach of examining suspects' attempts to influence, as well as different evidence disclosure strategies. In this section, I will describe my initial ideas about how suspects might attempt to influence the perception of the interviewer depending on when evidence is presented within the interview.

When all the evidence is presented early on in the interview, (e.g., "There is an eyewitness who saw you in the library during the time of the crime."), the suspect will probably abstain from stating that they were not at the location where the criminal offence happened. Instead, the suspect might state that they were at that location *(Admission)* but did not do anything wrong or unlawful *(Denials)*. In line with Hartwig et al., (2005), the suspect will probably tell a story incorporating and accounting for all the evidence held by the interviewer, and thereby make the incriminating

information less useful by simply offering a logical explanation for the evidence held by the interviewer *(Rational Persuasion)*. Following from that, it is plausible that when all the evidence is presented early on in the interview, suspects will be more likely to employ instrumental influencing behaviours which seek to directly deal with and account for the evidence presented.

By contrast, when all the evidence is presented at a later stage in the interview, the suspect, being unaware of the evidence which the interviewer has against them, will probably tell a story which omits any detail that may seem suspicious or incriminating (e.g., not mentioning they were in the library during the time of the crime). By the time when the evidence is presented in the interview, the suspect's story will probably lack consistency with the evidence because of the omission of information or might entirely contradict the evidence held by the interviewer. Then, when the suspect becomes aware that their story lacks consistency with the evidence, the suspect would be placed altogether in a rather uncomfortable position. That is, the suspect will not only need to account for the evidence, but also need to explain away the inconsistencies between their original story and the evidence presented. In order to explain these inconsistencies, the suspect could adjust their story to incorporate the evidence presented *(Rational Persuasion)*, which might also include admitting to doing something wrong *(Admissions)* that the suspect may then wish to minimise *(Justifications)*. In line with Watson et al., (2021), when the suspect is unable or unwilling to explain away the evidence, the suspect might shift away from instrumental behaviours which seek to account for the evidence and toward behaviours which seek to diminish some or all of the investigative pressure from the presentation of the evidence. Instead of explaining the evidence, the suspects may attempt to bias the interviewer's perception of the suspects by making the interviewer more compassionate toward the suspect *(Emotional Influences)*, less compassionate toward the alleged victim *(Denial of the Victim)* or by discrediting the statement of

the potential eyewitness *(Condemnation of the Condemners)*. On top of that, the suspects might try increase the strength of their arguments by appealing to their own trustworthiness *(Trustworthy Displays)*. Consequently, it seems plausible that suspects will be more likely to prioritise relational influencing behaviours which seek to bias the interviewer's perception of the accused suspect, alleged victim, other potentially case-specific people (e.g., eyewitness) when all the evidence is presented later in the interview.

Strength of Evidence

Moston, Stephenson, and Williamson (1992) proposed that the objective amount of evidence incriminating a suspect is probably less important than the suspect's perception of the strength of the evidence against them. That is, when a suspect is under the impression that the evidence presented is weak, the suspect might be more disposed to directly refute part or all aspects of the allegations of the crime in question. By contrast, when a suspect is under the impression that the evidence presented is strong, the suspect is aware that a direct refutation of part or all aspects of the allegations would be pointless (Moston et al., 1992). Specifically, with weak evidence, such as statements from eyewitnesses or alleged victims, suspects can usually suggest that this person must be mistaken or lying, whereas with strong direct evidence (i.e., being found in the possession of the stolen property), suspect would be aware that their denial would be less credible (Moston & Stephenson, 1993; 2009). Similarly, Brimbal and Luke (2019) proposed that evidence, whose reliability can be called into question (e.g., eyewitness testimony), is typically more open for interpretation. Nonetheless, suspects are generally disposed to directly accuse another person of lying (Moston & Engelberg, 2011). On top of that, Brimbal and Luke (2019) also suggested that when evidence, whose reliability can be called into question, is presented in the interview, suspects

are less likely to adapt their story to incorporate and account for the evidence held by the interviewer. Simply put, when weak evidence is presented in the interview, the suspect's account is usually less consistent with the evidence. By contrast, when evidence, which binds the suspect closer to the specific criminal act, is presented in the interview, suspects are more inclined to make a statement which is consistent with the evidence (Brimbal & Luke, 2019). Furthermore, Evans (1993) found that suspects are more likely to offer an admission when strong as opposed to weak evidence is presented in the interview. Interestingly, a similar pattern of confessions was found by Moston et al., (1992) and Sellers and Kebbell (2009). In an observational study, Moston et al., (1992) gathered data on 1067 interviews with suspects which were carried out by Metropolitan Police officers. The study showed that the suspects were less likely to confess when weak as opposed to strong evidence bound the suspects to the scene of the crime, and this evidence was presented in the interview. Similarly, Sellers and Kebbell (2009) found that a higher rate of confessions when strong rather than weak evidence was presented in the interview. Beyond that, Moston and Stephenson (1993) found the suspects' use of their right to silence was not affected by the suspects' perception of the strength of the evidence against them. Interestingly, the exception to this finding is evidence from a police officer. That is, suspects seemed unwilling to suggest that a police officer could be mistaken. Instead, suspects employed their right to silence (e.g., no comment) so as to avoid any potential issues which could result from proposing that a police officer could be wrong or lying.

Suspects Use Of Influencing Behaviours Depending On The Strength Of Evidence

In this section, I will describe my initial ideas about how influencing behaviours are likely to be enacted depending on the suspect's perception of the strength of the evidence against them

as well as when this evidence is presented within the interview. Of note, both contextual factors will be considered together, as the evidence cannot be separated from the context in which it is presented.

When weak evidence links the suspect to the crime scene, and this evidence is presented to the suspect at an early or later stage of the interview (e.g., “There is an eyewitness who saw you in the library during the time of the crime.”), the suspect will probably abstain from stating that they were not at the location where the criminal offence happened. Instead, the suspect might state that they were at that location *(Admission)* but did not do anything wrong or unlawful *(Denials*). In line with Moston and Stephenson (1993), the suspect will probably think that their denial would be credible, as with statements from eyewitnesses, the suspect can simply suggest that the eyewitness must be mistaken *(Blame Third Parties)* or lying (*Condemnation of the Condemners)*. Nonetheless, as noted earlier, suspects are generally disposed to directly accuse some third party of lying (Moston & Engelberg, 2011). Consequently, it seems likely that suspects will simply offer a logical explanation for the evidence against them *(Rational Persuasion)*. In addition to that, when weak evidence is presented later in the interview, suspects will probably be less likely to adjust their story to incorporate and account for any inconsistencies between their story and the evidence presented. Following from that, it seems plausible that a similar behavioural pattern would be found regardless of when weak evidence is presented in the interview. Consequently, it seems plausible that when weak evidence is presented in the interview, the suspect could be more likely to employ instrumental influencing behaviours which directly deal with and account the evidence presented.

By contrast, when strong evidence links the suspect closer to the crime scene, and this evidence is presented to the suspect at an early or later stage of the interview (e.g., “There is

security-cam footage of you touching the stolen property."), the suspect is placed altogether in a much more uncomfortable position. Here, the suspect will probably know that their outright denial would lack credibility, as with security-cam footage, the suspect cannot simply suggest that the footage is erroneous. Instead, the suspect would probably need to offer a logical explanation for the evidence, which could include admitting to doing something wrong *(Admission)*, that the suspect then wishes to minimise by somehow justifying their unlawful actions to the interviewer *(Justifications)*. In line with Watson et al., (2021), when the suspects are unable or unwilling to explain away the evidence, the suspect will probably shift away from instrumental behaviours, which seek to explain the evidence, and toward behaviours which seek to bias the perception the interviewer has of the accused suspect, alleged victim, other case-related people (e.g., potential eyewitness), or the evidence presented. Similar to late disclosure of evidence, the suspects might then seek to bias the interviewer's perception of the suspects by making the interviewer more compassionate toward the accused suspect *(Emotional Influences)*, less compassionate toward the alleged victim *(Denial of the Victim)* or eyewitness *(Condemnation of the Condemners)*, or else claim that forced beyond the suspect's control are responsible for their unlawful actions *(Denial of Responsibility)*. On top of that, the suspects might try to make their arguments sound more credible by appealing to their own trustworthiness *(Trustworthy Displays)*. Alternatively, the suspects might also get angry at the allegations *(Displays of Dominance).* Consequently, it seems likely that when strong evidence is presented in the interview, suspects might prioritise relational influencing behaviours which seek do not seek to account for the evidence, but instead seek to diminish some or all of the investigative pressure from the presentation of the evidence (Watson et al., 2021).

The Present Research

The present research investigated the impact of evidence disclosure timing and strength of evidence on behaviours suspects employ to influence the perception of the interviewer in the context of an investigative interview. To investigate this, an experimental setup based upon observations from previous research and practice was developed (Hartwig et al., 2005; Watson et al., 2021). In this experiment, participants take on the role of a guilty suspect and are given the task to convince the investigating interviewer of their innocence. During the investigative interview, participants will need to adapt to the presentation of weak or strong evidence while trying to accomplish their goal (i.e., convince the interviewer of their innocence).

Research Question: How do evidence disclosure timing and evidence strength affect the use of behaviours suspects employ to influence the perception of the interviewer during the investigative interview?

Methods

Design and Manipulation

This study consisted of a 2x2 between-subjects design using evidence disclosure timing (early versus late) and strength of evidence (weak versus strong) as the independent variables to determine their effect on participants' use of influencing behaviours. This was assessed qualitatively using content analysis.

Participants

The study consisted of a convenience sample. Recruitment for participants was mainly done through an institutionally offered test-subject system (SONA). Course credit could be obtained through participation. Other participants were recruited through the social media channels of the researchers (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn). No incentive was offered to participants who signed up outside of the participant pool. The sample included 101 (46 male; 55 female) participants. The participants' mean age was 25.55 (*SD* = 7.34, Range = 18 - 63). The participants' nationalities were Dutch (n = 50), German (n = 31), and Other (n = 20). The majority of participants were students from the University of Twente (N = 45), or students from another university (N = 45), compared to not being a student (N = 11). Each participant was randomly allocated to one of the four experimental conditions: early disclosure - weak evidence (N= 51), early disclosure - strong evidence (N =50), late disclosure - weak evidence (N =50), and late disclosure - strong evidence (N =50) (see Appendix B). The participants were informed that the interview would be audio and video recorded. Correspondingly, all participants were assured that the recorded audio and video tapes would be securely stored on university servers. Moreover, all participants were assured that their data would not be accessible to anyone except the researchers. The present research was authorized by the BMS Ethics Committee (Reference number: 210103).

Procedure

Instructions

Before the interview, all participants obtained identical instructions. The instructions included a thorough and detailed description of the theft that the participants had allegedly committed. Specifically, the instructions tasked the participants to take on the role of a thief, who had stolen Apple Airpods from another student's bag in the university library. The scenario

description contained details about their role (e.g., motive, thoughts, feelings, and actions), alleged victim, other case-related people (e.g., other students or university staff present in the library), and the sequence of events. The scenario was described from the perspective of the participants to help them identify with the role and activities appearing in the scenario. Furthermore, the participants were informed that they were suspects in an investigation and that the interviewer had information about the fact that they had been in the area on the day of the theft.

The participants were tasked to convince the interviewer of their innocence. Specifically, the participants were led to believe the interviewer was not knowledgeable of their guilt so that the participants would believe they could offer a credible denial for the theft of the Airpods. No instructions were given to the participants as to what strategies they should use to convince the interviewer of their innocence. Nonetheless, participants were encouraged to put themselves in the role of the suspect under suspicion and accordingly try to act from within their role.

Pre-interview

The (pre)-Interview part of the research was conducted by two researchers, one of whom portrayed the role of the interviewer. During the pre-interview part, the interviewer kept out of sight by turning the microphone and camera off. The interviewer was always portrayed by the researcher who was not familiar or acquainted with the participants. The rationale behind this role separation was to specifically minimize the effect of any pre-existing relationship between the participants and the interviewer (see Polman, 2021 for research results on rapport). First, the researcher welcomed the participants and began explaining the general outline of the interview. Further, the researcher ensured that the participants had fully understood the purpose of the interview (e.g., their role and task), the practical procedure (e.g., audio and video recording), and

established expectations and ground rules (e.g., no interruption, rushing, or disrespect). In particular, the researcher emphasized impartiality on the part of the interviewer and thus the fair and respectful treatment of the participants during the interview. In addition, participants were informed that the interview should not elicit any foreseeable discomfort, distress, or danger. In case of discomfort, the interview could be ended early. Questions or concerns that had arisen were fully addressed before the interview. Beyond that, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and anonymity were emphasized as well. Then, informed consent was obtained from all participants vocally. To ensure privacy, all interviews were carried out in a peaceful and private online environment.

Interview

To begin the interview, all participants were instructed to signal their readiness. Accordingly, the researcher, who had welcomed the participants, muted their microphone, and turned off their camera. Then, the interviewer, who had been keeping out of sight, turned on their microphone and camera. This means that both the researcher and the interviewer were, concurrently always present, though only one was ever visibly present at any one time. None of the researchers were professional interviewers or had any prior experience in conducting investigative interviews in an experimental setting. Both researchers conducted all four interview types. The interview script, which was carried out, was originally introduced by Kassin and Fong (1999), as used by Hartwig et al., (2005) in their research on deception detection which first demonstrated the strategic use of evidence (SUE) effect. The present research used this interview script specifically as a means of manipulating the interview context. For the full interview scripts see Appendix A and B.

At the beginning of all interviews, the interviewer began by delivering the legal caution in a manner that ensured the participants understood their legal rights when being interviewed ("You do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence"). The interviewer then carried on by reading out the allegations and presenting the participants with the suspicion of guilt concerning the theft of the Airpods ("As you have been informed, you are suspected of having stolen Airpods in the library yesterday at 2 pm"). The interviewer then offered the participants a chance to admit their guilt in the form of a confession ("Do you confess to having committed this crime?").

Early Disclosure Condition. In the early disclosure condition, the interviewer then immediately informed the participants about all the evidence against them (see Table 1). The pieces of evidence were, accordingly, presented one after the other. In the weak evidence condition, the participants were informed that the interviewer had evidence that the participant was logged into a computer at the library during the time of the theft. Furthermore, the participants were informed that their fingerprints were found on the victim's table. Lastly, the participants were informed that the receptionist told the interviewer that she saw someone who matches the participant's description looking into the victim's bag. In the strong evidence condition, the participants were informed that the interviewer had evidence that the participant was logged into the computer next to the computer of the victim at the library during the time of the theft. Furthermore, the participants were informed that their fingerprints were found on the victim's bag. Lastly, the participants were informed that the interviewer had CCTV footage of the participant looking into the victim's bag. After the presentation of the evidence, the interviewer continued by obtaining a full uninterrupted account from the participants. Specifically, the interviewer asked the

participants to tell their story in full ("Please tell us exactly what you were doing during the time of the crime"). Thereafter, the participants were asked to comment on all the evidence pointing against them. The interviewer then posed three specific questions about the evidence ("Have you been at the library yesterday at 2 in the afternoon?", "Did you see the Airpods that were stolen?", and "Did you touch the Airpods?"). The interviewer posed these specific questions so that the participants would address the evidence presented by the interviewer. Finally, the interviewer offered the participants another chance to admit their guilt in the form of a confession ("Do you confess to stealing the Airpods?").

Late Disclosure Condition. The same steps were carried out in both evidence disclosure conditions, but in a different order (see Appendix B). In the late disclosure condition, the interviewer, after offering the participants a chance to admit their guilt in the form of a confession, then immediately continued by obtaining a full uninterrupted account from the participants. After the participants had offered their full account, the interviewer, while still withholding the evidence itself, posed the same three specific questions about the evidence as in the early disclosure condition. The interviewer posed these specific questions so that the participants would address the evidence which the interviewer held (while also enabling the comparison between the conditions, see Appendix B and C). The interviewer then continued by informing the participants about all the evidence pointing against them. The same weak or strong pieces of evidence were presented in both evidence disclosure conditions (see Table 1). Thereafter, the participants were asked to comment on all the evidence. Finally, the interviewer offered the participants another chance to admit their guilt in the form of a confession.

Closing. Closing all interviews, the interviewer and researcher thanked the participants for their participation thereby concluding the interview.

Strength of Evidence Manipulation

The strength of evidence was determined using the Evidentiary Strength Scale (i.e., Police Foundation Scale; Amendola & Slipka, 2009). The scale used a 5-point Likert scale (anchored at 1 = "This piece of evidence is exceptionally weak at connecting the alleged suspect to the crime", 3 = "This piece of evidence is neither particularly weak nor strong at connecting the alleged suspect to the crime", and 5 = "This piece of evidence is particularly strong at connecting the alleged suspect to the crime"). The scale offered concrete tangible examples of what would constitute weak and strong evidence. In the present research, the researchers directly took examples of physical evidence (e.g., fingerprints, CCTV footage) to use this as evidence against the participants for this specific mock theft within the investigative interview (see Table 1). According to the scale, a piece of evidence was considered weak because it could only tie the participant to the crime scene during the time of the crime. In this research, a sample item for weak evidence was "You were logged into a computer at the library during the time of the crime". According to the scale, a piece of evidence was considered strong because it could not only tie the participant to the crime scene, but also directly to the theft of the Airpods. A sample item for strong evidence was "We have CCTV footage of you looking into the victim's bag". In total, six pieces of evidence were used in the interview (see Table 1).

Table 1

Pieces of evidence for the weak and strong evidence condition

Evidence	Weak evidence	Strong evidence

One	"You were logged into a computer at the library during the time of the crime"	"You were logged into the computer next to the computer of the victim at the library during the time of the crime"
Two	"We also found your fingerprints on the victim's table"	"We also found your fingerprints on the victim's bag"
Three	"The receptionist told us that she saw someone who matches your description looking into the victim's bag"	"We have CCTV footage of you looking into the victim's bag"

Qualitative Data Analysis

This qualitative study was exploratory. To explore the impact of suspect influencing behaviours in investigative interviews, all 101 interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded in Atlas.ti 9. The data was primarily analysed through deductive (i.e., directed) content analysis (Elo, S., & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2004, 2014), albeit inductive content analysis was also permitted. Deductive content analysis relied on pre-existing concepts, theories, or frameworks for the analysis (Elo, S., & Kyngäs, 2008; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Mayring, 2004, 2014). For this qualitative analysis, the categorisation table matrix developed by Watson et al., (2021) provided the initial starting framework to code all the interviews (see Figure 1). In particular, the coding was based on the utterances of the participants during the investigative interview. During the initial coding process, the interviews were carefully read, and those parts of the text were highlighted that were related to the pre-established codes specified in the categorisation table matrix. Then, the highlighted parts were coded using the pre-established codes. Specifically, the unit of analysis was the sentences and words expressing a single or multiple influencing behaviours. Of note, when employing deductive content analysis there was no predetermined criteria with respect to the size of a unit of analysis. Then, sentences or paragraphs

containing information corresponding to the categories were identified, analysed, and assigned to the relevant category in the coding scheme. Beyond that, sentences or paragraphs containing information that did not fit the original categorisation table matrix were identified, analysed, and inductively added as a new code to the categorisation table matrix. Thereby, data that did not fit the categorisation table matrix were used to create a new code, based on the principles of inductive content analysis (Mayring, 2004, 2014). Consequently, the qualitative data analysis was carried out, using both inductive and deductive approaches simultaneously. After working through the interviews, the data were reanalysed to avoid running the risk of missing content during the initial coding process. Of interest is that the whole text and not only parts of the text (e.g., highlighted, or coded) were considered during the reanalysis. Accordingly, all interviews were reanalysed. One researcher (i.e., subject expert) was involved in the data analysis process. Subsequently, the data were transferred to IBM SPSS Statistics 26 to proceed with the quantitative analysis. Initially, quantitative analysis was intended to be performed which analysed the frequency of behaviour usage across the four experimental conditions. However, this research lacked sufficient frequency of behaviour expression to make the analysis meaningful. Accordingly, the results were not further discussed but are presented in Appendix C for transparency reasons.

Results

Behaviour Frequency

Combined, the interviews comprised 253.65 minutes of dialogue (M = 2.51 minutes, SD = 0.96, Range: 1.14 to 7.39 minutes) and 1043 codes were applied across all participant utterances. Of the 11,579 participant utterances identified across the 101 interviews, 11,564 (99.87%)

participant utterances were coded with at least one of the identified influencing behaviours (i.e., 0.13% of participant utterances did not fit the criteria for any codes, namely neutral statements).

For this qualitative analysis, the taxonomy of influencing behaviours developed by Watson et al., (2021) was employed. In support of Watson et al., (2021), the findings of this deductive analysis indicated that the new data mainly reproduced the content of their original taxonomy. Specifically, this deductive content analysis identified 15 discrete behaviours participants employed to influence the interviewer (as opposed to 18 behaviours from Watson et al., (2021)), as this research did not observe denial of responsibility, denial of injury, and shifting the topic. Beyond the original taxonomy of Watson et al., (2021), the qualitative analysis independently identified a new influencing behaviour labelled information seeking, which is similar to a behaviour that was originally conceptualised by Pearse and Gudjonsson (2003), and whose conceptualisation was further expanded on by van Schaik (2021). Table 2 presents a catalogue comprising a description of all influencing behaviours that were identified across all investigative interviews.

Table 2

Catalogue of the identified influencing behaviours

Behaviour	Behaviour Description
Denials	
Complete Denials	Participants refuted some or all aspects of the allegations.
Partial Denials	Participants refuted part of a single accusation.
Claimed Ignorance	Participants claimed to lack information, including details or leads, or memory recollection of the theft of the Airpods.
Memory Lapse	Participants claimed to be unable to recall any information regarding the theft of the Airpods.
Rational Persuasion	Participants offered rational and logical arguments to account for the evidence presented, that were at least minimally credible, at least in the eyes of the participant.
Dominance	
Intimidation	Participants employed intimidatory tactics such derogatory comments, taunting, or belittling the questioning process.
Impose Restriction	Participants used their right to remain silent and demand legal representation.

Justifications	
Denial of the Victim	Participants justified the theft by claiming that the student, whose Airpods were stolen from his bag (here, the victim), deserved to have the theft committed against him because of his own actions (e.g., victim spilled coffee on the participant's notes, but did not apologise for that and only cleaned his own table).
Condemnation of the Condemners	Participants tried to shift the focus of attention from the accusations to the questionable motives of the receptionist (here, the condemner) that accused them of the theft. Subsequently, the receptionist was accused of being a liar and conspirator
Trustworthy Displays	
Integrity	Participants offered statements that suggest that the participant is honest and would not try to deceive the interviewer.
Benevolence	Participants offered statements that indicated that the participant is a good person. Specifically, participants tried to present themselves as kind, compassionate, and accordingly not the kind of person who would commit the theft which they are under suspicion for.
Emotional Influence	
Contrition	Participants directly apologized for their 'unlawful' actions.
Supplication	Participants claimed to feel, or genuinely felt insecure, vulnerable, and overwhelmed being questioned by the interviewer.
Deflections	

Blame Third Parties	Participants deflected from their own guilt by blaming a fellow student (here, a third party) for the theft of the Airpods.
Admissions	Participants admitted to part or all aspects of the accusations.
Information Seeking	Participants sought out additional information from the interviewer to obtain clarification or get the interviewer to repeat the question. In addition, participants also posed case-specific questions to predict what and how much evidence the interviewer could potentially hold against the participants.

Note. The following descriptions of the behaviours were derived from the 101 video-recordings of the interviews.

Behaviour Frequency Across All Interviews

Table 3 presents the percentage of utterances that could be coded within each behaviour alongside the number of participants that employed the behaviour at least once. Participants used between 6 to 15 discrete behaviours (*Mdn* = 9, *IQR* 8 – 10). Similar to Watson et al., (2021), this qualitative analysis found that while participants deployed a moderate range of influencing behaviours, there was only a small number of discrete behaviours that were used often by most participants. These were rational persuasion, admissions, and denials. Consequently, attempts to influence were much less nuanced for this sample than originally observed by Watson et al., (2021).

Table 3

Occurrences of influencing behaviours across all 101 participants

Behaviour	Frequency	Percentage of behaviours	Number of participants using behaviour	Median use of behaviour per participant	Lower quartile	Upper quartile	Range
Denials							
Complete Denials	407	38.87%	101	4	4	4	1-7
Partial Denials	12	1.15%	10	0	0	0	0-3
Claimed Ignorance	75	7.16%	39	0	0	1	0-5
Memory Lapse	34	3.25%	27	0	0	1	0-3
Rational Persuasion	151	14.42%	97	1	1	2	0-4
Dominance							
Intimidation	15	1.43%	14	0	0	0	0-1

Impose Restriction	4	0.38%	3	0	0	0	0-2
Justifications							
Denial of Responsibility	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0
Denial of the Victim	11	1.05%	10	0	0	0	0-2
Denial of the Injury	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0
Condemnation of the Condemners	1	0.10%	1	0	0	0	0-1
Trustworthy Displays							
Integrity	2	0.19%	2	0	0	0	0-1
Benevolence	9	0.86%	8	0	0	0	0-2
Emotional Influence							
Contrition	1	0.10%	1	0	0	0	0-1

Supplication	5	0.48%	4	0	0	0	0-2
Deflections							
Shifting Topic	0	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0
Blame Third Parties	5	0.48%	4	0	0	0	0-2
Admissions	198	18.91%	100	2	1	2	0-4
Information Seeking	17	1.62%	12	0	0	0	0-3
Neutral Statement	5	0.48%	5	0	0	0	0-1

Note. Percentages based on a total of 11579 utterances across all interviews, and 11564 utterances coded as at least one influence behaviour.

Behaviour Frequency Compared Across Experimental Conditions

Table 4 presents the percentage of times a specific influencing behaviour was identified across the four experimental conditions. Participants to whom weak evidence was presented early employed between 6 to 14 discrete behaviours (*Mdn* = 8, *IQR* 7 – 9.25), those to whom weak evidence was presented late employed between 8 to 14 discrete behaviours (*Mdn* = 9, *IQR* 8 – 11), those to whom strong evidence was presented early employed between 7 to 15 discrete behaviours (*Mdn* = 10, *IQR* 9 – 11), and those to whom strong evidence was presented late employed between 6 to 14 discrete behaviours (*Mdn* = 8, *IQR* 7 – 10). This was followed up through Mann-Whitney tests which indicated that the number of discrete behaviours that were employed did not significantly differ between participants to whom evidence was presented early on, or late in the investigative interview, $U = 1095.50$, $Z = -1.24$, $p = .22$, nor between participants to whom weak or strong evidence was presented $U = 1187.00$, $Z = -.61$, $p = .55$. The table exemplified that participants tended to employ a similar amount of discrete influencing behaviours across all experimental conditions.

Table 4

Percentages of times influence behaviours were represented across the four experimental conditions

Technique	Percentage Per Condition			
	Early Disclosure / Weak Evidence	Early Disclosure / Strong Evidence	Late Disclosure / Weak Evidence	Late Disclosure / Strong evidence
Denials				
Complete Denials	26.64%	21.62%	25.80%	26.04%
Partial Denials	25.00%	16.67%	8.33%	50.00%
Claimed Ignorance	13.33%	17.33%	29.33%	40.00%
Memory Lapse	23.53%	32.35%	29.41%	14.71%
Rational Persuasion	20.53%	22.52%	29.14%	27.81%
Dominance				
Intimidation	13.33%	6.67%	33.33%	46.67%
Impose Restriction	0.00%	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%

Justifications				
Denial of responsibility	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Denial of the victim	18.18%	27.27%	9.09%	45.45%
Denial of the Injury	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Condemnation of the Condemners	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Trustworthy Displays				
Integrity	0.00%	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%
Benevolence	22.22%	44.44%	33.33%	0.00%
Emotional Influence				
Contrition	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Supplication	0.00%	60.00%	0.00%	40.00%
Deflections				

Shifting Topic	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Blame Third Parties	0.10%	50.00%	40.00%	0.00%
Admissions	26.56 %	22.22%	24.75%	26.56%
Information Seeking	5.88%	23.53%	23.53%	47.06%
Neutral Statement	40.00%	60.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Note. Percentages based on a total of 11579 utterances across all interviews, and 11564 utterances coded as at least one influence behaviour. Percentages of the total number of occurrences of each of the influencing behaviours is listed per experimental conditions.

Use of Behavioural Types Compared Across Experimental Conditions

This subsequent discussion highlights in what ways evidence disclosure timing and the strength of the evidence impacted the suspects' use of influencing behaviours during the investigative interview. Each of the behaviours is discussed in turn with examples below. The approach undertaken for the discussion was focused on discriminating amongst the range of influencing behaviours, including the extent of their use (frequency), timing and degree of use (intensity) as well as the corresponding context (i.e., the accompanying influencing behaviours employed by participants).

Denials

Denials formed one of the most frequently used types of participant behaviour (50.43%). For this description only, complete and partial denials (40.02%) were collapsed into a single code because these behaviours were used for the same function. For the same reason, claimed ignorance and memory lapses (10.41%) were also collapsed into a single code.

Complete and Partial Denials. In cases when evidence was presented early on in the interview, participants more frequently employed complete and partial denials (as opposed to other types of denials) to dispute an account "But, uhm, I wasn't there, I was at the store", or disagree with a question "Did you see the Airpods? No, I did not see any Airpods", but regularly did not offer any sound or compelling arguments to back up the refutation put forward. In particular, when weak evidence was presented in the interview, participants admitted to being present at the local library during the time of the theft but frequently denied seeing, let alone touching the Airpods, which were stolen from another student's bag. By contrast, when strong evidence was presented in the interview, participants admitted to being present at the library during the time of the theft

but less frequently denied seeing or touching the Airpods which were stolen from a student's bag. By and large, all participants directly denied stealing the Airpods from the student's bag.

Claimed Ignorance and Memory Lapses. In cases when evidence was presented later in the interview, participants more frequently employed memory lapse and claimed ignorance (as opposed to other types of denials) to deny all knowledge of the theft of the Airpods. In particular, the participants acted confused by claiming to lack information "Like, who exactly am I accused of having stolen something from?", or to be unable to recall any information "Uhm, it's a bit hard to recall, cause it was a bit of a busy day for me". Here, participants implied that although they were present at the library during the time of the theft, they were so busy that they failed to notice the theft of the Airpods. That is, participants implied that the theft of the Airpods must have happened while they were looking the other way "There was a crime?". Thus, participants excluded the possibility that they could answer any question about the theft. Participants answered "I don't know" or "I cannot remember anything" to a question asked by the interviewer.

Rational Persuasion

Rational persuasion formed one of the more frequently used types of participant behaviour (14.42%). In contrast to Watson et al., (2021), rational persuasion was less frequently employed than denials. This means denials were frequently used but were not accompanied by any rational and logical arguments, such as an alibi, to support the refutations. Interestingly, this phenomenon most frequently occurred in instances when weak evidence was presented in the interview. In this research, rational persuasion was most frequently employed when the evidence was presented later, rather than early on in the interview, in particular when the evidence was strong. To specify, when weak evidence was presented in the interview, participants often responded by offering

cogent arguments to account for the evidence presented that were at least minimally credible, such as an alibi. Here, participants told a simple story that only incorporated a few pieces of the evidence presented. The following exchange exemplified that participants typically restricted their statements to the evidence presented, while withholding any self-incriminating information which was not known to the interviewer prior to the interview (e.g., not mentioning that they sat next to the student whose Airpods were stolen).

PARTICIPANT: "I was trying to…I was looking for a job on the computer in the library because I cannot afford living by myself at the moment. You see, I really want to earn my own money. And as I said, I don't know."

By contrast, when strong evidence was presented in the interview (e.g., CCTV footage), the participants became extremely forthcoming with information. These participants did not admit culpability for the theft, but they told a longer, more detailed story including many of their case-related actions (e.g., explaining that they had touched the bag of the student whose Airpods were stolen). The following exchange exemplified that participants were typically more forthcoming with information beyond the evidence which was presented to them although this put the participants in a more incriminating position.

PARTICIPANT: "Uhm, I was searching for a job. Because I am a little broke at the moment. And I was making notes on where I could apply for the jobs. Then he spilled his coffee over my notes. He started cleaning his table and I helped him, so I grabbed some paper he had in his bag. So, maybe that's why my fingerprints were on his bag."

Dominance

Displays of dominance formed some of the less frequently used types of participant behaviour (1.81%). Displays of dominance consisted predominantly of intimidation (1.43%), and even more rarely of imposing restrictions (0.38%). This means that imposing restrictions was scarcely employed across all interviews, and consequently was not further discussed. Furthermore, intimidation was most frequently employed when evidence was presented later, rather than early in the interview, in particular when the evidence was strong. To elaborate, when evidence was presented early on in the interview, participants employed intimidation in the form of mildly challenging responses, which included sarcasm, mockery, or derogatory comments "As far as I know, that is not a crime". In comparison, when evidence was presented later in the interview, participants initially displayed intimidation in the form of moderately challenging responses "If you have evidence of me doing it, please show it to me. I, I… I can't imagine that you have evidence because I didn't do it". Participants employed intimidation by expressing annoyance with the line of questioning "No, I have not seen Airpods, how can I touch Airpods if I haven't seen them, right?", or by belittling the questioning process "That is just bollocks". Participants tried to intimidate by using forceful and direct language to get their point across. This comparison exemplified that intimidation was employed at a higher level of intensity when the evidence was presented later, rather than early on in the interview. Either way, participants seemingly employed intimidation to get out of the questioning process. Specifically, participants abstained from directly responding to the allegations with a direct denial, but instead challenged the conclusions that could be inferred from the evidence presented, which is that the suspect is guilty of stealing the Airpods. Of note, intimidation often tended to be replaced by rational persuasion in the late disclosure condition. In these specific instances when evidence was withheld until later in the interview, the

participants initially employed intimidation to signal their unwillingness to cooperate in terms of information supply. Then, after the evidence was presented in the interview, participants stopped and became more willing to offer some explanation for the evidence presented.

Justifications

Justifications formed some of the less frequently used types of participant behaviour (1.15%). Furthermore, justifications were less frequently employed than originally observed by Watson et al., (2021). Here, justifications primarily consisted of denial of the victim (1.05%) and even more rarely of condemnation of the condemners (0.10%) (i.e., denial of responsibility and denial of injury were never employed across all interviews). This means that condemnation of the condemners was only employed once across all interviews, and consequently was not further discussed. Furthermore, Denial of the Victim was most frequently employed when strong evidence was presented at some stage in the interview. That is, when evidence was presented in the interview, participants employed denial of the victim to minimize the severity of their actions by passing the blame onto the victim "There was this prick sitting next to me who spilled all of his coffee over all of my notes, which made me quite pissed, to be frank". Denial of the victim typically included insults and name-calling. Furthermore, participants employed denial of the victim by claiming that the damage to the victim's property was not damage, but an act of rightful revenge. Thus, the participants implied that the victim was deserving of the punishment, even though the participants acknowledged that their own actions caused damage to the victim's property and were wrong despite the circumstances. Here, the following exchange exemplified that participants employed Denial of the Victim to convince the interviewer that the student whose

Airpods were stolen (i.e., the victim) somehow provoked the unlawful actions, or else that their unlawful actions were justified because of the victim's actions.

INTERVIEWER: "We have some evidence against you. You were logged into the computer next to the computer of the victim at the library during the time of the crime. We also found your fingerprints on the victim's bag. We have CCTV footage of you looking into the victim's bag. What do you have to say about this?"

PARTICIPANT: (...) "Yeah, I was kind of angry at this guy, because he didn't even say sorry after he messed up my things. So, as I am, I wanted a kind of revenge. Maybe harm a little piece of him too. So, I looked for something I could tear apart or some way I could cause a little harm too".

Trustworthy Displays

Trustworthy displays formed one of the less frequently used types of participant behaviour (1.05%). Trustworthy displays were most frequently employed at the outset of the interview, that is before any evidence was presented "First of all, I would like to state my best intentions here. I've never been in contact with law enforcement or anything". On top of that, trustworthy displays were most frequently employed when evidence was presented early on, rather than later in the interview, especially when the evidence was strong. That is, when evidence was presented in the interview, participants displayed trustworthiness by exaggerating their good dispositional qualities, such as their kindness, compassion, and honesty. Specifically, participants tried to imply that the theft of the Airpods would not fit their normal pattern "Because I wouldn't look in any

stranger's bag", would not be in their character "I am not a thief", or by implying that they did not commit the theft because it simply was no point to it "I have my own Airpods". Crucially, the participants tried to appeal to the interviewer for understanding, hoping to be trusted. Here, participants did not state that they did not steal the Airpods from the student's bag, but rather that they had no motivation to steal the Airpods in the first place. Specifically, participants abstained from directly responding to the allegations with a direct denial, but instead gave the interviewer the opportunity to reach the 'right' conclusions from the evidence presented, which in the eyes of the participant was that they are innocent.

Emotional Influence

Emotional influences formed one of the more rarely used types of participant behaviour (0.58%). Furthermore, emotional influences were less frequently employed than originally observed by Watson et al., (2021). Here, emotional influences consisted mostly of supplication (0.48%) and even more rarely of contrition (0.10%). This means that contrition was only employed once across all interviews, and consequently was not further discussed. Furthermore, supplication was only employed when strong evidence was presented early on, and late in the interview. Then, participants employed supplication by signalling confusion, such as not understanding a straightforward question "I don't know about any Airpods! See, I'm a poor bloke myself I don't know which Airpods you're talking about", or a lack of orientation "So, for me, this is all new and I must say I'm shaking! I'm… I'm super nervous, officer". Either way, supplication was employed to communicate dependency and a need for help in the relationship, and thus evoke compassion and helping behaviour from the interviewer.

Deflections

Deflections formed one of the more rarely used types of participant behaviour (0.48%). Deflections consisted only of blaming third parties (i.e., shifting the topic was never employed across all interviews). Deflections were most frequently employed when some type of evidence was presented early on in the interview. On some occasions, participants directly apportioned blame to some other party "Uhm, like I said I just saw a girl approaching the bag and taking something out of it, but I didn't see what it was that she took out of the bag". Here, participants apportioned blame to draw attention to another potential suspect. Nonetheless, participants were reluctant to directly accuse another person of stealing the Airpods from the student's bag. Instead, participants simply suggested that another person could be responsible for the theft of the Airpods "Maybe someone went and looked in that bag as well". On other occasions, participants directly apportioned blame to a specific third party by suggesting that the eyewitness did not see correctly and was simply mistaken "I think that the receptionist must have been mistaken because I did not look through anybody's stuff". That is, the participants refuted the evidence against them by discrediting the statement of the eyewitness. Either way, participants employed blaming third parties in response to the presentation of evidence by the interviewer which the participants tried to deny.

Admissions

Admissions formed one of the more frequently used types of participant behaviour (18.91%). Admissions were most frequently employed when the evidence was presented later, rather than early on in the interview, in particular when the evidence was weak. To specify, when weak evidence was presented in the interview, participants admitted to being present in the library

during the time of the crime but regularly denied seeing, let alone touching the Airpods, which were stolen from the student's bag. By contrast, when strong evidence was presented in the interview, participants admitted to being present in the library during the time of the crime but also frequently admitted to seeing and touching the student's Airpods. Either way, none of the participants admitted to stealing the Airpods from the student's bag.

In addition to that, admissions often tended to co-occur with rational persuasion. Specifically, admissions were used to acknowledge an account, but these were usually accompanied by an argument that was at least minimally plausible "Okay, so, here's how I experienced the situation. I went into the library to do some job applications, so I hardly noticed this man. Fingerprints on his backpack? Maybe because I dropped a pencil and I had to pick it up. Maybe that's why they are there". Beyond that, admissions often tended to co-occur with denials. That is, admissions were employed to agree with some aspects of the allegations which were then accompanied with denials of the remaining accusations "I saw the Airpods in the bag, yes. I did not take them because I already have a pair at home". The foregoing extract exemplified that admissions were often employed to agree with minor aspects of the theft, followed by stronger refutations of the more serious allegations.

Information Seeking

Beyond the initial framework proposed by Watson et al., (2021), this research independently observed information seeking as another influencing behaviour, which is similar to a behaviour which was originally conceptualised by Pearse and Gudjonsson (2003), and whose conceptualisation was further expanded on by van Schaik (2021). Information seeking formed one of the more rarely used types of participants behaviour (1.62%). Importantly, the results showed

that the conceptualisations of information seeking could be clearly split into different uses depending on when evidence was presented in the interview. Similar to the conceptualisation of Pearse and Gudjonsson (2003), when evidence was presented early on in the interview, participants more frequently employed information seeking to seek out general information "It's about the person that was sitting next to me, right?" or get the interviewer to repeat a question "When was the crime exactly?". Here, participants sought out information to clear up any confusion or misunderstandings, perhaps a result of mishearing a question. Similar to the conceptualisation of van Schaik (2021), when evidence was presented later in the interview, participants more frequently employed information seeking by posing case-specific questions to figure out whether the interviewer had any evidence that would incriminate them in the theft of the Airpods. To specify, participants initially acted to be unknowing of the theft, yet willing to help the interviewer in any way possible. This willingness was then accompanied by participants directly asking questions about the theft of the Airpods "But uhm, yeah, is there more on that CCTV thing? Maybe it will help me remember". Here, participants asked these case-specific questions to prompt the interviewer to disclose any evidence that would implicate them in the theft of the Airpods while probably hoping to be able to incorporate the information into their answer "So, first of all, who is the victim? Sorry, I need to picture the situation a bit better". By the time when evidence was presented in the interview, participants, who initially sought out case-related information, promptly stopped asking these questions. Instead, some participants responded by readily sharing information concerning the theft of the Airpods, while other participants became less forthcoming with information.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to explore the different behaviours suspects employ to influence the perception of the interviewer in the context of an investigative interview. In support of Watson et al., (2021), the results of this qualitative analysis indicated that the new data mainly reproduced the content of their original taxonomy. The present research identified 15 discrete behaviours suspects employed to influence the perception of the interviewer (as opposed to 18 behaviours from Watson et al., (2021)), however, this research did not observe denial of responsibility, denial of injury, and shifting the topic. Beyond the original taxonomy, this research independently observed information seeking as another influencing behaviour, which is similar to a behaviour that was originally conceptualised by Pearse and Gudjonsson (2003), and whose conceptualisation was further expanded on by van Schaik (2021). In addition, this research found that while suspects employed a moderate range of influencing behaviours, there was only a small number of behaviours that were often employed by almost all suspects. These were rational persuasion, denials, and admissions. Importantly, the present findings suggested that evidence disclosure timing and strength of evidence had a bearing on the behaviours suspects employed to influence the perception of the interviewer during the interview. In cases when weak evidence was presented in the interview, there was a stronger tendency towards instrumental influencing behaviours (i.e., behaviours that address the evidence directly). However, when strong evidence was presented in the interview, there was a stronger tendency towards relational influencing behaviours (i.e., behaviours that attempt to manage the relationship dynamics). Specifically, the present findings highlighted that when strong evidence was presented in the interview, suspects typically shifted away from concrete arguments addressing the evidence and toward minimisation.

Main Findings

The present findings showed that the suspects employed multiple behaviours to influence the perception of the interviewer throughout the investigative interview. These behaviours directly mapped on Watson et al.,'s (2021) two-dimensional grid of influencing techniques: power and interpersonal framing (see Figure 1). The power dimension ranges from low power behaviours that seek to establish affiliation, liking, trust, or rapport, to high power behaviours that seek to assert authority, status, or control, or demand respect. The interpersonal framing dimension ranges from instrumental behaviours that directly address the evidence presented, to relational behaviours that seek to manage the relationship dynamics between the interviewer, accused suspect, alleged victim, and other case-related people (e.g., eyewitnesses, or other potential suspects). In this section, suspects' attempts to influence the perception of the interviewer depending on the interview context is discussed below.

Suspects' Use Of Influencing Behaviours When Weak Or Strong Evidence Was Presented Early On In The Interview

The present findings showed that when all the evidence was presented early on in the interview, all suspects typically told a story which incorporated and accounted for the evidence held by the interviewer. Specifically, the suspects offered a logical and rational explanation for the existence of the evidence *(Rational Persuasion*). This finding is consistent with other studies where it was found that early disclosure helps guilty suspects incorporate and account for the evidence in their story (Hartwig et al., 2005; 2006; Jordan, Hartwig, Wallace, Dawson, & Xhihani, 2011). The present findings also showed that this behavioural pattern would occur regardless of the type of evidence which was presented early on in the interview. Nonetheless, the present

findings also highlighted some behavioural differences depending on the type of evidence which was presented early on in the interview. That is, when weak evidence linked the suspect to the scene of the crime, and this evidence was presented to the suspect at an early stage of the interview (e.g., "There is an eyewitness who saw you in the library during the time of the crime."), the suspect abstained from saying that they were not at the location where the criminal offence happened. Instead, the suspect typically stated that they were at that location *(Admission)* but did not do anything unlawful *(Denials)*. Specifically, the suspects produced a story incorporating and accounting for all the evidence presented *(Rational Persuasion)*, while withholding any information that might seem incriminating (*Denials*, e.g., touching the Airpods which were stolen from another student's bag). This means that the suspects disclosed almost nothing about their 'unlawful' case-related actions, and only admitted to doing something potentially incriminating which was already known to the interviewer prior to the interview. By contrast, when strong evidence linked the suspect closely to the crime, and this evidence was presented early on in the interview (e.g., "There is security-cam footage of you touching the Airpods"), the suspects refrained from saying that they did not touch the stolen property *(Denials)*, instead the suspects offered a logical explanation for why they touched it. In order to explain this, the suspects typically became more forthcoming with case-specific information, which sometimes included admitting to doing something potentially incriminating, such as touching the Airpods which were stolen from another student's bag, which was already known to the interviewer prior to the interview. Compared to suspects who were presented with weak evidence, these suspects disclosed case-specific information to a greater extent but admitted to potentially incriminating actions to a lesser extent. Turning to rational persuasion, this finding is in line with Brimbal and Luke (2019), who found that suspects' statements tend to be more in line with the evidence when strong evidence is

presented within an interview. Considering admissions, this finding is surprising and inconsistent with Evans (1993) who found that suspects were more likely to admit to doing something wrong when strong as opposed to weak evidence was presented in the interview.

Turning to denials, the present findings showed that when any type of evidence was presented early on in the interview, the suspects' use of denials was equally likely to map onto an escape or avoidance strategy (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). Hartwig and Granhag (2008) proposed that when suspects are aware of the evidence or assume that there is evidence against them, the suspects tend to resort to an escape strategy and directly deny doing something wrong or unlawful. For example, concerning this study, the suspects would directly deny seeing or touching the Airpods which were stolen from another student's bag. Of note, the present findings showed that the suspects would only deny something which they expected the interviewer to not know. Granhag and Hartwig (2008) suggested that when the suspects are unaware of the evidence or think there is none, the suspects might employ an avoidance strategy and withhold any detail that may seem incriminating. For example, concerning this study, the suspects would tell an elaborate story about how they helped a student clean-up, who spilled coffee onto his bag, while withholding that they also stole the Airpods from the same student's bag. Following from that, it can be argued that the suspects' use of denials maps onto efforts of self-control, which can be explained by the self-regulation theory (for a comprehensive review of basic self-regulation theory, see Carver & Scheier, 2012). Self-regulation theory posits that people set goals and utilise planning as well as self-regulatory practices in order to reach these goals (Carver & Scheier, 2012; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). Furthermore, self-regulation theory postulates that people also anticipate or encounter problems as well as threats to successful goal pursuit, which people can act upon by employing self-regulatory practices to ward off the threat, regain control and put them

back on track to pursue their goal (Carver & Scheier, 2012; Davisson & Hoyle, 2017). The self-regulatory practices can be broken down into two basic categories: behavioural and cognitive practices (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). That is, a person can engage in behavioural self-regulatory practices by changing their behaviour to deal with threat (e.g., searching for options that would result in a different course of action), or a person can deal with the threat cognitively by focusing on less harmful aspect of the threat (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). Translated to investigative interviews, suspects typically pursue the goal of convincing the interviewer of their innocence (Hartwig & Granhag, 2008). In turn, suspects might perceive the upcoming interview as a threat as the suspect's liberty would be at stake in case the interviewer would think the suspect is guilty and then go on to charge the suspects with the crime. In addition, not knowing what evidence the interviewer has against the suspect might add to this threat (of note, the present research was a mock-suspect study in which none of the students, who portrayed the suspects, were actually guilty of a crime (they read a vignette of a case), thus there was not threat). In order to successfully pursue their goal, the suspects need to eschew behaviours which threaten their goal pursuit, and instead engage in behaviours which bring them closer to their goal. For example, the suspect might decide to deny doing something wrong *(behavioural control)*, or the suspect might view the interview as a welcome opportunity to convince the interviewer of their innocence *(cognitive control)*. In this research, the focus is on cognitive control. There are two types of cognitive control: (1) information control, and (2) decision control (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). Information control, which represents a basic self-regulatory practice, refers to the sense of control reached when a person acquires information about an upcoming stressful situation (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). The way this is enacted within an investigative interview is that suspects will try to predict what evidence they might be presented

with and need to account for during the interview and then suspects will plan their response accordingly. Essentially, information control will then inform the suspects' decision control. Decision control refers to the sense of relief that a person gets from making a decision about how to engage with a stressful situation (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). The way this is enacted within an investigative interview is that the suspects will decide on the information to deny, omit, and admit during the interview. Decision control then leads onto the actual behaviour (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). Translated to the present research, when evidence was presented early on in the interview, the suspects' sense of information control was arguably high because the suspects knew what and how much evidence the interviewer had against them. Knowing what the suspects can and cannot say so as to not contradict the knowledge of the interviewer might have induced the suspects to adopt an escape strategy with suspects directly denying something or an avoidance strategy with suspects withholding any information which the interviewer did not know.

On top of that, the present findings showed that when weak evidence was presented early on in the interview, the suspects tended to refute the evidence by suggesting that the eyewitness was mistaken or had been lying to the interviewer *(Blame Third Parties)*. Of note, the present findings also showed that this behavioural pattern would also occur when weak evidence was presented later in the interview. In accordance with this, Moston and Stephenson (1993) found that when weak evidence is presented in the interview, the suspects tend to think that their direct denial would be credible, as with statements from eyewitnesses, the suspects can simply suggest that the other person got it wrong, or in case of another potential suspect, that this person is deceiving the interviewer. Specifically, this may be explained by the proposition that less reliable pieces of evidence, such as eyewitness statements, are typically much more open to interpretation (Brimbal & Luke, 2019). By contrast, when strong evidence was presented in the interview, the suspects

probably thought that their outright denial would lack credibility, as with security cam-footage, the suspects cannot simply suggest that this footage is erroneous. Especially in a real suspect interview, this would unlikely increase the credibility of the accused suspect. Instead, the suspects admitted to touching the Airpods, which they then minimised *(Justifications)* by claiming good intentions, such as wanting to help the victim clean the spilled coffee off the Airpods which in turn would justify their fingerprints on the victim's Airpods *(Trustworthy Displays)*. In contrast to Moston and Engelberg (2011), the present findings showed that suspects were generally disposed to directly accuse another person of lying *(Blame Third Parties).* This may be explained by the fact that the present research was a mock-suspect study in which none of the students, who portrayed the suspects, were actually guilty of a crime (they read a vignette of a case), thus there were no legal consequences in case the interviewer would think they are guilty and none of the students would not be charged with the theft. Consequently, the mock-suspects could have been more willing to directly accuse someone else of lying.

Importantly, the present findings highlighted that rational persuasion was the bedrock of any attempt to influence (Watson et al., 2021), but also was frequently corroborated by other influencing behaviours. To emphasise, the present findings showed that admissions tended to co-occur with rational persuasion. That is, admissions were used to acknowledge part or all aspects of the allegation, but these were unlikely to come without any accompanying logical argument that was at least minimally credible. Similar to Watson et al., (2021), it can be argued that the admissions were employed to corroborate the arguments brought forth in their defence due to the honesty displayed in these particular instances.

Taken together, the present findings showed that when any type of evidence was presented in the interview, all suspects would tell a story which incorporates and accounts for all the evidence

presented, while withholding any information that may seem incriminating. In addition, suspects typically only admitted to the case-specific information which was known to the interviewer prior to the interview. Following from that, it can be argued that when any type of evidence was presented early in the interview, the suspects were more likely to employ instrumental influencing behaviours which seek to address and directly deal with the evidence presented. Importantly, these findings also draw attention to a problem interviewers might face when using evidence in investigative interviews. That is, when any type of evidence is presented early on in the interview, the interviewer will probably not be able to gather much, if any case-specific information from the suspects beyond what was already known to the interviewer prior to the interview. Then, in turn, the interviewer would experience problems in linking the suspect to the criminal offence thus decreasing the possibility to clear up a case which might otherwise remain unsolved. Moston and Engelberg (2011) suggested that evidence is an integral aspect when constructing a case against a suspect. Specifically, the evidence which is gathered during the investigative interview is the most commonly utilised form of evidence when charging a suspect (Moston & Engelberg, 2011. Consequently, it can be argued that when weak evidence binds the suspect to the scene of the crime, this evidence should be presented at a later stage of the interview so that the interviewer has a better chance at gathering as much accurate information as possible from the suspects and hopefully clear up the criminal offence.

Suspects' Use Of Influencing Behaviours When Weak Or Strong Evidence Was Presented Later In The Interview

The present findings showed that when evidence was presented later in the interview, the suspects, not knowing what evidence the interviewer held, tended to tell a short story *(Rational*

Persuasion) which omitted any detail that seemed incriminating *(Denials)*. This finding is line with other studies, where it was found that when suspects are unaware of the evidence against them, guilty suspects typically try to keep their story as short and simple as possible (Hartwig et al., 2005; Strömwall, Hartwig, & Granhag, 2006). In their meta-analysis DePaulo et al., (2003) found that liars would omit more details from their story, in part because this would allow for fewer possibilities for their lie to be detected. Following from, it can be argued that when evidence was presented later in the interview, the suspects probably told a short story containing only a few details so as not to contradict the evidence which the interviewer potentially held.

Turning to denials, the present findings showed that when the evidence was withheld until later the interview, the suspects' use of denials would mostly map on to an avoidance strategy (e.g., during the free recall, the suspects withheld that they sat next to the student whose Airpods were stolen) (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). This finding is line with Hartwig et al., (2005), who found that guilty suspects were more likely to withhold case-specific information when evidence was presented later in the interview. In addition to that, the present findings showed that when evidence was presented later in the interview, suspects' use of denial would rarely map on a denial strategy (e.g., in response to a direct question, the suspects typically refrained from offering an outright denial) (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). In line with the SUE technique, it can be argued that when evidence was presented later in the interview, the suspects' use of denials could be a consequence of their low sense of information control (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). That is, when evidence was presented later in the interview, suspects' sense of information control was arguably low because the suspects did not know what evidence the interviewer had against them. This, in turn, probably induced the suspects to adopt an avoidant strategy with suspects withholding any information which might seem incriminating and could connect them to the crime. Similarly, this

low sense of information control probably also hindered the suspects to adopt an escape strategy with the suspects typically refraining from offering an outright denial. This also fits well with the idea of the illusion of transparency (Gilovich, Savitsky, & Medvec, 1998; Kassin & Norwick, 2004), according to which liars will be reluctant to tell outright lies because they are afraid that their lie will be detected. In relation to this, Hartwig et al., (2005) stated that when the evidence had not been presented yet, it would be quite risky for suspects to offer an outright denial because there are more possibilities that their denial would inconsistent or outright contradict the evidence which the interviewer could potentially hold. Specifically, these inconsistencies between the suspects' statement and the evidence held by the interviewer could point to the suspects' guilt (Hartwig et al., 2005). In line with Hartwig et al., (2005), it can be argued that the safer way out for the suspects was to withhold any information which may seem incriminating.

The present findings showed that by the time when the evidence was presented in the interview, the suspects had typically not accounted for a few, or all pieces of the evidence held by the interviewer. Then, the suspects were altogether placed in a much more uncomfortable position. That is, the suspects needed to account for the evidence presented, as well as explain away the inconsistencies between their story and the evidence. This is in line with Hartwig et al., (2005) who found that when evidence is withheld until later in the interview, the suspects' account typically lacks consistency with the evidence due to omissions of self-incriminating information or may entirely contradict the evidence which the interviewer possesses. The present findings showed that the suspects' attempts to influence the perception of the interviewer differed depending on the type of evidence which was then presented in the interview. The present findings showed that when weak evidence was presented in the interview, the suspects were typically less likely to adapt their story by incorporating and accounting for the evidence presented. This also

meant that the suspects usually refrained from admitting to any potentially incriminating actions beyond what was already known to the interviewer prior to the interview. This in line with Brimbal and Luke (2019) who found that when weak evidence was presented in the interview, the suspects were less likely to adapt their story to account for the evidence presented. By contrast, the present findings showed when strong evidence was presented in the interview, the suspects tended to become more forthcoming with information in their attempt to explain away the evidence *(Rational Persuasion)*, which typically included admitting to doing something wrong that was not known to the interviewer prior to the interview *(Admissions)*, which the suspects then wished to minimise *(Justifications*). Turning to rational persuasion, the finding of this study is in line with Tekin et al., (2016) who proposed that suspects become more forthcoming with information when they are confronted with their own statement-evidence inconsistencies. Specifically, the suspects were more likely to contradict the evidence when evidence is withheld until later in the interview. Considering admissions, this finding is in accordance with Evans (1993) who found that suspects were more likely to admit to doing something wrong when strong as opposed to weak evidence was presented in the interview. In addition, this finding is consistent with Tekin (2016) who found that suspects were more likely to admit to doing something wrong when evidence was presented later, rather than early on in the interview. Compared to all other suspects who were presented with some type of evidence within the interview, these suspects admitted to potentially incriminating actions, which were not known to the interviewer prior to the interview, to a greater extent. Following from that, it can be argued that the combination of strong evidence and the Late Disclosure technique can account for the difference in the suspects' use of admissions.

Interestingly, the present findings showed that when strong evidence was presented later in the interview, the suspects were typically unwilling or unable to explain away the evidence

presented. Instead, the suspects tried to directly appeal to and sway the interviewer by using relational-based arguments, rather than concrete arguments directly related to the evidence to convince of innocence. Specifically, the suspects supported their statements by including appeals to their own trustworthiness *(Trustworthy Displays)*. In addition, the suspects attempted to bias the interviewer's perception of the suspect by making the interviewer more sympathetic or compassionate toward the accused suspect *(Emotional Influences)*, less sympathetic or compassionate toward the alleged victim or the eyewitness *(Justifications)*. Thus, the present findings showed that when strong evidence was presented later in the interview, the suspects shifted away from concrete arguments addressing the evidence and toward minimization. This is in line with Watson et al., (2021), who proposed that when suspects could not explain away these inconsistencies, suspects shifted away from behaviours which directly seek to address the evidence and toward behaviours which seek to bias the perception the interviewer has of the accused suspect, alleged victim, other case-related people (e.g., eyewitness, other potential suspects), or the evidence presented in the interview.

To draw a comparison, the present findings showed that when strong evidence was presented later in the interview, the suspects employed instrumental influencing behaviours which seek to directly deal with and account for the evidence to a lesser extent and employed relational influencing behaviours which seek to bias the perception the interviewer has of the suspect, alleged victim, and other case-related people (e.g., eyewitness, other potential suspects) to a greater extent. By contrast, when any type of evidence was presented early on, or when weak evidence was presented later in the interview, the suspects prioritised instrumental influencing behaviours, and only rarely supported their statements by utilising a relational influencing behaviour. This may be explained by the notion that when suspects were unwilling or unable to offer a legitimate reason

for the evidence presented (e.g., looking into the victim's bag and touching the victim's Airpods), the suspects shifted away from concrete arguments addressing the evidence and toward minimisation in an attempt to reduce the investigative pressure from the presentation of the evidence.

Information Seeking

Beyond the framework of Watson et al., (2021), the present research independently identified information seeking as another influencing behaviour, which is similar to a behaviour which was originally conceptualised by Pearse and Gudjonsson (2003), and whose conceptualisation was further expanded on by van Schaik (2021). Interestingly, the present findings showed that the conceptualisations of information seeking could be clearly split into different uses depending on the interview context. Similar to Pearse and Gudjonsson's (2003) conceptualisation of information seeking, the present findings showed that when evidence was presented early on in the interview, information seeking was employed to seek out more information from the interviewer. Here, information seeking sought to clear up any confusions or misunderstandings that were potentially the result of mishearing a question. Similar to van Schaik's (2021) conceptualisation of information seeking, the present findings indicated that when evidence was presented later in the interview, information seeking was employed to figure out whether the interviewer held any evidence that would incriminate the suspect in the theft of the Airpods. Following from this, it can be inferred that these two types of information seeking might not actually be the same behaviour as information seeking seems to fulfil a different function depending on when evidence is presented within the interview. On top of that, it can be argued that information seeking would most likely map onto the instrumental dimension of Watson et

al.,'s (2021) two-dimensional grid of influencing techniques as information seeking was utilized to directly address the (potential) evidence.

In line with the SUE technique, it can be argued that when evidence was presented later in the interview, information seeking represents a suspect's attempt to increase their sense of information control (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). For a brief recap, information control refers to the sense of control reached when a person acquires information about an upcoming stressful situation (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). The way this is enacted within an investigative interview is that suspects will try to predict what and how much evidence they might be presented with and need to account for during the interview and then suspects will plan their response accordingly (Granhag & Hartwig, 2008). Translated to the present research, it can be argued that when evidence was presented early on in the interview, the suspects' sense of information control was arguably high because the suspects knew what evidence the interviewer had against them. This, in turn, probably did not create a need in suspects to ask many, if any case-specific questions. By contrast, when evidence was presented later in the interview, the suspects' sense of information control was arguably low because the suspects did not know what and how much evidence the interviewer potentially had against them. This, in turn, probably created a need in suspects to increase their sense of information control which induced the suspects to ask these case-specific questions to predict what evidence they might be presented with and need to account for during the interview. Specifically, the suspects probably posed these questions in an attempt to sway the interviewer to disclose any evidence which the interviewer potentially held. Then again, by posing these questions, the suspects probably hoped to be able to make an informed decision on which information to admit, omit, and deny so as to not contradict any evidence which the interviewer potentially possessed.

Strengths and Limitations

One strength of the present research was the experimental research design. For the present research, which is complimentary to the field study of Watson et al.,'s (2021), it was decided to sacrifice ecological validity for internal validity so that all propositions from the field study could be taken and directly tested using an experimental design. The strength of this experimental design was the ability to control the interviewer's behaviour which allowed the researcher to directly manipulate the factors which could hypothetically impact the behaviours suspects employ to influence the perception of the interviewer within the investigative interview. This, in turn, allowed the researcher to make more direct claims about the effect of those manipulations on the influencing behaviours. Promising is also that the findings of this research confirm and further corroborate the results of other studies (Hartwig et al., 2005; Watson et al., 2021).

Furthermore, another limitation was that all the interviews were performed unblinded by the researchers. Specifically, the researchers were not blinded to the study objective, hypothesis, case vignette and the experimental conditions as the conditions were set by the researchers. However, this might increase the likelihood that the results do not generalize beyond the present sample.

Besides that, another limitation regards the limited cross-cultural applicability of the present research. The present research primarily sampled participants from low-context individualistic cultures (e.g., The Netherlands, and Germany), and consequently people from high-context collectivistic cultures (e.g., Spain, Columbia, or Japan) remained underrepresented. Past research has demonstrated that people from low-context individualistic cultures employ more explicit, direct, and content-oriented communication (instrumental behaviours) and respond better to content-oriented influencing behaviours, whereas people from high-context collectivistic

cultures employ more indirect and relationship-oriented communication (relational behaviours) and also respond better to relationship-oriented influencing behaviours (Beune, Giebels, & Sanders, 2009; Hall, 1967; Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Following this line of reasoning, it is plausible that the use of influencing behaviours might be different for suspects from low-context cultures (such as Germany) as opposed to more high-context cultures (such as Spain). Future research should prioritize sampling participants from a range of different cultural backgrounds and ethnic groups to acknowledge potential cross-cultural variations in suspects' attempts to influence.

The final limitation concerns the sampling method which was employed. This research made use of a convenience sample of university students, with more female than male participants. The present research sampled these participants because they met specific practical criteria, such as being easy to reach and available at a certain time, alongside their willingness to participate in the investigative interview. However, university students may not represent the targeted population. It is plausible that university students, unlike criminal offenders, did not experience the interview as nearly as stressful and the motivation to convince of innocence was not nearly as great as for criminal offenders, as none of the students were guilty (they read a case vignette), there were ultimately no (legal) consequences in case the interviewer would think they are guilty and accordingly none of the students would not be charged with the theft. Following this line of reasoning, it is plausible that the use of influencing behaviours might be different for university students as opposed to criminal offenders.

Conclusion

The present research demonstrated that the behaviours suspects employ to influence the perception of the interviewer were determined by evidence disclosure timing and the strength of the evidence. In particular, when weak evidence was presented in the interview, there was a stronger tendency towards instrumental influencing behaviours with suspects willing to directly deal with and account for the evidence presented. By contrast, when strong evidence was presented in the interview, there was a stronger tendency towards relational influencing behaviours with suspects unwilling or unable to directly account for the evidence presented. Here, when suspects could not offer a logical explanation for the evidence presented, suspects shifted away from concrete arguments addressing the evidence and toward minimisation. Then, suspects attempted to bias the interviewer's perception of their 'unlawful' actions, the alleged victim, and other case-related people. Building from that, it may be worthwhile investigating how other ways of presenting evidence such as different drip-feeding procedures (i.e., a procedure in which the interviewer presents one piece of the evidence at a time and then requests the suspect to address this piece of evidence, before presenting another piece, followed by another request and then continues this procedure throughout the entire interview, for a full explanation see Dando & Bull, 2011) may impact the behaviours suspects employ to influence the perception of the interviewer during the interview. In relation to this, it may also be worthwhile investigating how other types of evidence (e.g., evidence from police officer who witnessed the crime and then arrested the suspect) may impact the behaviours suspects employ to influence the perception of the interviewer during the interview.

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Appendix A: Interview Instructions

We request you read the following scenario again and imagine that you are the thief in order to prepare for the interview. Take all the time you need to prepare.

Yesterday you were in the library of the local university. You are short on money and are browsing through job offers on a library computer. Next to you, a young man was seated. He was wearing a white Gucci shirt and blue jeans. You thought he looked very rich and very arrogant. He spilled some of his coffee which stained a piece of paper you were using to write drafts for your application letters. He did not apologize and only cleaned the coffee off his own Table. When the man left to go to the bathroom ten minutes later, you noticed that his bag was open. You sneakily moved your chair to the man's table and went through his belongings. You noticed a pair of new, still sealed Airpods in a small pocket of the bag. You were not sure whether to take them or not. After a moment of consideration, you think to yourself: 'He is rich, he ruined my notes, I really need some money; I am taking his Airpods'. There are a few other people sitting close to you. A girl is seated at the table across from you and a man is seated 3 tables to your right. You wait until you are sure they are not looking at you and take the Airpods from the bag. After taking his Airpods, you moved back to your table. You decided to stay a while longer in order not to draw any attention to yourself. After another 30 minutes you left the library and went straight to a nearby store. You claimed you bought Airpods there a while ago and just got another pair for your birthday and asked if you can return them for money. The store offered you a €100,- voucher. You accepted the voucher and went home. Today you received a call from the local police station. You are being suspected of having stolen someone's Airpods and will now be interrogated.

We ask you to try and imagine you are the thief. The investigator knows you were in the area of the crime on the day it happened. The interrogator does not know whether you are guilty or not. Please, make your best attempt to convince the interrogating officer that you are innocent. Do whatever you think works best and try to imagine how you would actually act in this situation. If, during the interview, you feel like it will be impossible to convince the officer of your innocence, try and minimize the punishment by explaining and justifying what you've done. However, only resort to this when you are truly convinced that it is impossible to convince the investigator of your innocence.

Appendix B: Interview Scripts

Early disclosure, weak evidence.

Interviewer: Good morning/afternoon/evening. You do not have to say anything. But it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence. As you have been informed, you are suspected of having stolen Airpods in the library yesterday at 2pm.

Do you confess to having committed this crime?

We have some evidence against you. You were logged into a computer at the library during the time of the crime. We also found your fingerprints on the victim's table. The receptionist told us that she saw someone who matches your description looking into the victim's bag. Please tell us exactly what you were doing during the time of the crime.

Have you been in the library yesterday at 12 in the afternoon?

Did you see the Airpods?

Did you touch the Airpods?

Do you confess to stealing the Airpods?

Early disclosure, strong evidence.

Interviewer: Good morning/afternoon/evening. You do not have to say anything. But it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court.

Anything you do say may be given in evidence. As you have been informed, you are suspected of having stolen Airpods in the library yesterday at 2pm.

Do you confess to having committed this crime?

We have some evidence against you. You were logged into the computer next to the computer of the victim at the library during the time of the crime. We also found your fingerprints on the victim's bag. We have CCTV footage of you looking into the victim's bag. Please tell us exactly what you were doing during the time of the crime.

Have you been in the library yesterday at 12 in the afternoon?

Did you see the Airpods?

Did you touch the Airpods?

Do you confess to stealing the Airpods?

Late disclosure, weak evidence.

Interviewer: Good morning/afternoon/evening. You do not have to say anything. But it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence. As you have been informed, you are suspected of having stolen Airpods in the library yesterday at 2pm.

Do you confess to having committed this crime?

Please tell us exactly what you were doing during the time of the crime.

Have you been in the library yesterday at 12 in the afternoon?

Did you see the Airpods?

Did you touch the Airpods?

We have some evidence against you. You were logged into a computer at the library during the time of the crime. We also found your fingerprints on the victim's table. The receptionist told us that she saw someone who matches your description looking into the victim's bag.

What do you have to say about this?

Do you confess to stealing the Airpods?

Late disclosure, strong evidence.

Interviewer: Good morning/afternoon/evening. You do not have to say anything. But it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence. As you have been informed, you are suspected of having stolen Airpods in the library yesterday at 2pm.

Do you confess to having committed this crime?

Please tell us exactly what you were doing during the time of the crime.

Have you been in the library yesterday at 12 in the afternoon?

Did you see the Airpods?

Did you touch the Airpods?

We have some evidence against you. You were logged into the computer next to the computer of the victim at the library during the time of the crime. We also found your fingerprints on the victim's bag. We have CCTV footage of you looking into the victim's bag.

What do you have to say about this?

Do you confess to stealing the Airpods?

Appendix C: Quantitative Results

Quantitative Data Analysis

The qualitative data were transferred in IBM SPSS Statistics 26 to proceed with the quantitative analysis. First, the frequency of each code was calculated to determine the dominant codes (i.e., influencing behaviours) per experimental condition (see Table 3). Then, the data were analysed using Chi-square tests of Independence with evidence disclosure timing (early versus late) and strength of evidence (weak versus strong) as the independent variables to determine their effect on the suspect influencing behaviours (i.e., the dependent variables). Chi-square tests of Independence were chosen because the Chi Square statistic is generally used for testing relationships between categorical variables (Fisher, 1922; Pearson, 1902). The purpose of the chi-square tests was to determine if a difference between observed frequencies of suspect influencing behaviours and expected frequencies of suspect influencing behaviours was due to chance, or if it is due to the experimental conditions. Beyond that, Chi-square tests were only to be computed provided that the expected frequencies for each cell were greater than 1 (Field, 2013; Howell, 2012). Correspondingly, Chi-square tests were also only to be computed provided that the expected frequencies were at least 5 for the majority of cells (i.e., three out of four cells) (Field, 2013; Howell, 2012).

Results.

Chi-Square tests of Independence were performed to examine the association between evidence disclosure timing (early versus late) and strength of evidence (weak versus strong) on suspect influencing behaviours. The association between these variables was not significant (see Table 5). Beyond that, Chi-Square tests of Independence were performed to examine the

association between evidence disclosure timing (before versus after presenting the evidence) and strength of evidence (weak versus strong) on suspect influencing behaviours. The association between these variables was also not significant (see Table 6). In summary, the results did not support the assumption that suspect influencing behaviours were influenced by evidence disclosure timing and the strength of evidence.

Table 5
Chi-Square tests of Independence for all suspect influencing behaviours that met the assumptions for analysis

Influencing Techniques	Influencing Behaviour	Disclosure Timing	Strength of Evidence		X2	P
			Weak	Strong		
Denials	Complete Denials				1.16	.28
		Early	108	88		
		Late	105	106		
	Partial Denials				1.03	.31
		Early	3	6		
		Late	2	1		
	Memory Lapse				2.03	.15
		Early	8	11		
		Late	10	5		

	Claimed Ignorance				0.01	.93
		Early	10	13		
		Late	22	30		
Rational Persuasion	Rational Persuasion				0.18	.67
		Early	31	34		
		Late	44	42		
Dominance	Intimidation				0.60	.44
		Early	2	1		
		Late	5	7		
Admissions	Admissions				0.63	.43
		Early	52	44		
		Late	49	52		

Information Seeking	Information Seeking				0.30	.58
		Early	1	4		
		Late	4	8		

Table 6

Chi-Square tests of independence for all influencing behaviours that met the assumption for analysis before and after the evidence was presented

Influencing Techniques	Influencing Behaviour	Disclosure Timing	Strength of Evidence		X2	P
			Weak	Strong		
Denials	Complete Denials				1.33	.52
		Early	108	88		
		Late - Before	75	73		
		Late - After	30	33		
	Partial Denials				1.71	.42
		Early	3	6		
		Late - Before	1	0		
		Late - After	1	1		

	Memory Lapse			0.68	.71
		Early	8	11	
		Late - Before	8	2	
		Late -After	2	3	
	Claimed Ignorance			4.17	.12
		Early	10	13	
		Late - Early	13	21	
		Late - After	9	9	
Rational Persuasion	Rational Persuasion			0.64	.73
		Early	31	34	
		Late - Before	23	25	
		Late - After	21	17	

Dominance	Intimidation				1.27	.53
		Early	2	1		
		Late - Before	4	4		
		Late - After	1	3		
	Impose Restriction				-	-
		Early	0	2		
		Late - Before	0	0		
		Late - After	0	2		
Justifications	Denial of Responsibility				-	-
		Early	0	0		
		Late - Before	0	0		
		Late - After	0	0		

Denial of the Victim				1.59	.45
	Early	2	3		
	Late - Before	1	2		
	Late - After	0	3		
Denial of the Injury					
	Early	0	0		
	Late - Before	0	0		
	Late - After	0	0		
Condemnation of the Condemners				-	-
	Early	0	0		
	Late - Before	0	0		
	Late - After	1	0		

Trustworthy Displays	Integrity				-	-
		Early	0	1		
		Late - Before	0	0		
		Late - After	1	0		
	Benevolence				3.60	.17
		Early	2	4		
		Late - Before	1	0		
		Late - After	2	0		
Admissions	Admissions				1.54	.46
		Early	52	44		
		Late - Before	46	46		
		Late - After	3	6		

	Contrition				-	-
		Early	0	0		
		Late - Before	0	0		
Emotional Influences		Late - After	0	1		
	Supplication				-	-
		Early	0	3		
		Late - Before	0	0		
		Late - After	0	2		
Deflections	Shifting Topic				-	-
		Early	0	0		
		Late - Before	0	0		
		Late - After	0	0		

	Blame Third Parties				-	-
		Early	0	3		
		Late - Before	0	0		
		Late - After	2	0		
Information Seeking	Information Seeking				1.11	.58
		Early	1	4		
		Late - Before	2	2		
		Late - After	2	6		