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**The effect of judgment errors on perceived levels of trust, rapport and provided (accurate) information in suspect interviews**

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## **Abstract**

Previous research suggests that judgment errors made by police officers affect suspects in suspect interviews. It was found, among other things, that the making of communication errors has a positive effect on the provided information by the suspect, but a negative effect on the perceived trust and quality of relationship between interviewer and suspect. This study further elaborates on this by exploring whether there is a difference when the interviewer makes this error intentionally or not. Additionally, the effect of an intentional communication error with either an accusatorial or investigative interviewing style is also investigated. The participants (N =150) were assigned to one of six experimental conditions. Participants had to imagine that they were being accused of shoplifting, and were instructed to deny this crime, after which they were interviewed. The findings indicate that making judgment errors has a positive effect on the provided accuracy of information, but not on perceived levels of rapport and trust and provided quantity of information. Intentionality of the communication error did not seem to have an effect on the variables, nor does the combination of interview style with intentionality. A main effect of interview style was found, indicating that when an investigative style of interviewing is used, higher levels of rapport, trust, and provided quantity of information was measured in comparison to when an accusatorial style of interviewing was used.

## **Introduction**

On September 21, 2008, the four-month-old child of Adrian Thomas was found unresponsive in his bed and his grandparents alerted emergency personnel who took him to the hospital. The hospital staff examined the injuries and concluded that the baby was a victim of blunt force trauma. The police quickly picked up Adrian Thomas for questioning and after numerous hours of questioning, he confessed to murdering his child. After a long process Adrian Thomas was convicted of murder and sentenced to 25 years to life in prison. However, in 2014 a new trial was ordered because the interrogation was supposedly highly coercive and the statements of Thomas were seen as involuntary. The court concluded that Thomas was told 67 times that what he had done to the baby was an accident, 14 times that he would not be arrested and eight times that he was allowed to go home once he confessed. Because of this the court concluded that the confession of Thomas was coercive, and therefore the confession and the testimony could not be used in the retrial. The court concluded in the retrial that the baby of Thomas did not suffer from blunt force trauma, but instead passed away from sepsis, and Adrian Thomas was released from prison on June 12, 2014 (Possley, 2014).

Law enforcement is always on the look-out for suspect interviewing methods that are both effective in terms of information gathering and preventing false confessions. The previous example about questionable interrogation techniques that were used by law enforcement shows this dilemma. It is apparent that even if a suspect talks, they can provide false information if they feel that is in their best interest. For instance, suspects may talk because they think the interviewer will sort everything out, even when the suspect provides false information. Another example is that when suspects are brought to a police station, they could experience high levels of anxiety and distress. By providing information, they could escape the police station and therefore lower these feelings of anxiety and distress (Gudjonsson, 2003).

Recent research shows that making communication errors in suspect interviews prompts the suspect to provide more information, but it also decreases trust and quality of relationship between interviewer and suspect (Oostinga, Giebels & Taylor, 2018a). This raises the question whether errors could actually be used as strategy in a suspect interview in order to make the suspect talk. Research shows that in police interviews in the United States the interviewers often make intentional errors as a strategy, for instance when they claim to have eyewitnesses that have identified the suspect, or that accomplices of the suspect have given statements against the suspect (Magid, 2001). They make these errors to make the suspect provide them information about the crime they supposedly had committed. Intentionally making an error has been the

subject of investigation, since empirical research shows that it can lead to false confessions and wrongful convictions (Gohara, 2005). In the example of Adrian Thomas, the interviewers knowingly made the error of telling Thomas that he would not be arrested once he confessed and that he could go home. Adrian Thomas was not aware of the fact that the interviewers made these errors. But what if he was? Does the making of communication errors also affect the perceived trust, quality of the relationship and provided (accurate) information if the suspect is aware that the interviewer makes a communication error? What role play trust and the quality of relationship between suspect and interviewer when the suspect is aware that a communication error is made? Additionally, does the style of interviewing matter? When a communication error is made by the interviewer, it affects the relationship between suspect and interviewer in a way that the suspect may decide to stop cooperation with the interviewer (Alison, Alison, Noone, Elntib & Christiansen, 2013). In suspect interviews, there are generally two methods for questioning suspects, either information-gathering or accusatorial. Which method is the most effective has been a debating point among researchers, since each has its own strengths and weaknesses (Meissner, Redlich, Bhatt & Brandon, 2012). Does one of these interview styles mitigate the effect of the communication error on the amount of perceived trust, quality of relationship and provided (accurate) information of the suspect? This exploratory research will answer these questions, and will further elaborate on previous research by Oostinga et al., (2018a) and Oostinga, Giebels & Taylor (2018b), that already researched the impact of communication errors in suspect interviews.

Little research has been done about using communication errors as a strategy in suspect interviews in a real-life setting, let alone in combination with interview styles and intentionality of the communication error. Because of this it is unlikely that this can be investigated by a literature review, therefore research in a real-life setting is preferable. This research will further contribute in acquiring knowledge about these factors and how communication errors may be used in law enforcement. The next section begins with some background information about the quality of relationship, also known as rapport, trust, information provision, interview styles and communication errors. After this, details will be given about the methodology of this study, the results of the suspect interviews, and finally the discussion and conclusion that also addresses the limitations and implications of this study.

### **Rapport and trust**

The example of Adrian Thomas showed that Thomas was coerced into a confession, illustrating a low quality of relationship between interviewer and interviewee. Quality of relationship between interviewer and suspect is a factor that is also known as rapport (Gfeller

et al., 1987). Individuals that experience rapport for instance state that after a conversation they had a good click and chemistry. Rapport only exists between individuals that interact with each other. Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) state that rapport consists of three elements, namely mutual attention, positivity, and coordination. Mutual attention is the degree of involvement that both the interviewer and suspect experience. Examples of this are looking at each other and acknowledging that the other party is there (Abbe & Brandon, 2013). Positivity focuses on friendliness and caring in social interactions (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990), whereas coordination can be seen as a form of shared understanding. In addition, coordination also refers to the extent to which the behavior of the interviewer and suspect is synchronized. Examples of this are mimicry or finishing each other sentences (Abbe & Brandon, 2013). Vanderhallen, Vervaeke and Holmberg (2011) additionally state that rapport consists of a relationship that results from interaction between people and provides both individuals with a warm feeling, is harmonious, offers trust, and stimulates cooperation. If a relationship is diminished or negative, there is little to no trust between both parties.

Trust is defined as the decision of an individual to accept vulnerabilities associated with another individual without the ability to control the actions of the other (Alarcon et al., 2018; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 2007). Kramer and Carnevale (2008) agree with this definition, and add that individuals trust one another when they believe it will be beneficial to one's long-term self-interest. For instance, suspects may place their trust in the interviewer when they think that the interviewer may help them prove their innocence in the long-term. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) divide trust into three factors, namely ability, benevolence and integrity. Ability is the group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that makes sure that an individual has influence in a specific domain. For instance, one can be highly competent in sports, affording that person trust on tasks relevant to sports. The same person however may have little experience in technical areas, so they may not be trusted with tasks in that specific area. Benevolence is the extent to which a trustee is believed to do right to the trustor, not taken into account the own profits he or she may gain. Benevolence suggests that the trustee has some specific attachment to the trustor. So, although one does not gain any rewards, they will still help one another. Integrity in a relationship involves the perception that for instance interviewers use a certain set of rules and principles that the interviewer and the suspect find acceptable. He or she is expected to act accordingly to the situation, is honest and has no hidden agenda. Trust can minimize anxiety and distress of an individual, and maximize the disclosure of information (Gudjonsson, 2003).

### **Information provision**

In suspect interviews, the goal of the investigator is to get the suspect's side of the story and to allow the offender a chance to provide an alibi or excuse for the allegation made against him (Chancellor, 2021). Next to trust, research of Goodman-Delahunty, Martschuk and Dhimi (2014) show that detainees were more likely to disclose meaningful information earlier in the interview when rapport-building techniques were used compared to coercive techniques such as intimidation, threats or hostility. Vallano and Compo (2011) state that when investigators fail to establish rapport, suspects or witnesses report a greater amount of misinformation. On the other hand, research of Brodt and Tuchinsky (2000), and Van de Vliert, Schwartz, Huisman, Hofstede and Daan (1999) show that a combination of coercive and cooperative tactics may be effective. Taken together, these strategies are all examples of strategies that police investigators can use when confronting their suspects, with the goal of receiving an accurate and reliable statement. As previously mentioned, truthful statements of suspects correlate with high levels of trust and rapport (Goodman-Delahunty, Martschuk, & Dhimi, 2014; Gudjonsson, 2003; Vallano & Compo, 2011), suggesting that in order to elicit truthful statements from suspects, investigators should make sure to create a relationship that offers both rapport and trust. However, suspects can react differently to each strategy that police officers use, so each interview may ask for a different approach.

### **Interviewing styles**

During suspect interviews, police officers typically use either confession (accusatorial) or information gathering styles (Moston & Engelberg, 1993). In an accusatory interviewing style, the interviewer confronts the suspect with an accusation (Vrij, Mann & Fisher, 2006). In this type of interviewing the interviewer presumes that the suspect is guilty. According to Kassin and Gudjonsson (2004), it involves three elements: isolation, confrontation and minimization. The suspect is typically detained in a small room (isolation), is informed that there is incriminating evidence (confrontation) and the investigator tries to morally justify the crime in order to make confession see as the best possible means of escape for the suspect (minimization). As seen in the case of Adrian Thomas, the suspect is offered excuses for the crime, and is coerced into confession. Often closed-ended confirmatory questions are used to elicit confessions (Vrij, Hope & Fisher, 2014). As a consequence of this, suspects say relatively little and are given very few chances to speak. The usage of closed-ended questions thus lead to less information provision, as is confirmed by research of Oxburgh, Ost, Morris, and Cherryman (2014), that state that more items of relevant information were elicited from open-ended questions than closed-ended questions.

An example of an accusatory interviewing style is the Reid technique. The Reid technique is used with the goal of breaking down the resistance of suspects to make them confess. Police officers apply various persuasive tactics such as morally justifying the crime in order to make confession seem as the best possible means of escape (minimization) or try to scare and intimidate the suspect into confessing by making false claims about evidence and exaggerating the seriousness of the offense and the magnitude of the charges (maximalization) (Kassin & McNall, 1991). In the beginning of the interview the suspect is already confronted with the fact that the police officer knows that they are guilty, and that it is in their best interest to confess. Police officers assume that only guilty people confess to crimes (Gudjonsson, 2003). Although the authors claim an 80% confession rate (Gudjonsson & Pearse, 2011), other authors (Bull & Soukara, 2010; Meissner & Lassiter, 2010; Snook, Eastwood, Stinson, Tedeschi & House, 2010) warn that the confrontational processes used in the Reid technique could lead to false confessions, and that this technique should be replaced by a technique that is less coercive. For example, if suspects are isolated and become stressed, anxious or scared they may produce a compliant (but false) confession to liberate themselves from the interrogation (Moore & Fitzsimmons, 2011). Because of these complaints, an interviewing style was introduced that was more focused on information gathering (Gudjonsson, 2003).

Police interviewers that use the information gathering style explain to suspects the allegation against them. Police officers do not confront the suspect with an accusation, but use open questions that make the suspect describe their actions in their own words. After the suspect has been given the opportunity to explain themselves without interruption, they are confronted with inconsistencies in their story or between their story and the evidence that is known by the interviewer (Vrij et al., 2014).

An example of an information gathering strategy is the PEACE model of interviewing. This model was introduced by the police of the United Kingdom in 1993, and was one of the first forms of investigative interviewing. In short, PEACE stands for Planning, Engaging with the suspect, gaining an Account, Closure of the interview and Evaluation. These are all phases of the interview (Clark, Milne & Bull 2011). Planning refers to the preparation and planning phase before the interview and Engaging refers to the phase wherein the legal requirements are met and the first contact is made between interviewer and suspect. In the Account phase the account of the events that happened according to the suspect is collected and hereafter in the Closure section the interviewer gives a summary of what has been said to the suspect, allowing the suspect to agree or modify his/her statement before the suspect can be charged by the police officer. After this, the interview is finished. The Evaluation phase is used by police officers to

assess the effectiveness of the interview as well as determining possible next steps (Walsh & Bull, 2010). This model is not a linear one, since the interviewer can circle back to a previous phase if this is necessary (Walsh & Bull, 2012). It also avoids leading questions, heavy pressure or psychological manipulation (Shawyer, Milne & Bull, 2009), therefore potentially reducing the incorrect information exchange between the suspect and the police officer. Rabøl et al. (2011) describe missing, wrong, misinterpreted or misunderstood (verbal) information exchange as communication errors.

### **Communication errors and their effect on trust, rapport and (accurate) information provision**

Oostinga et al. (2018b) examined communication errors of negotiators in crisis negotiations interactions between negotiators and suspects. They further assessed these communication errors in a suspect interview setting and classify communication errors in three domains: communication errors in the general context, errors related to the content of the message and errors related to judgments (Oostinga et al. 2018a). Contextual errors involve messages that relate to police practices or procedures, so errors that relate to the context of the situation. Errors related to the content of the message are factual errors, such as using the wrong information in an interview with the suspect. Errors related to judgments can be situations in which the investigator fails to adequately recognize and acknowledge the thoughts and emotions of the subject. As a result of this, the relationship between suspect and interviewer can be diminished. Oostinga et al. (2018b) concluded in their research that judgment errors are generally considered to have a more detrimental effect than factual errors, this study will therefore further investigate the impact of judgment errors on suspects.

In a suspect interview, judgment errors appear to undermine the relationship between suspect and interviewer by decreasing trust and rapport (Oostinga et al. 2018a). This may be because important conditions for the formation of trust are the willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another person or people (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995), and social predictability that states that an individual can predict in what way the interviewer will act (Hommel & Colzato, 2015). Judgment errors may cause a decrease in trust between interviewer and suspect, since judgment errors made by the interviewer make the suspects unable to predict in what way the interviewer will act and therefore not be willing to be vulnerable to the action of the interviewer. Judgment errors are also likely to affect the building of rapport, since an important requisite of rapport is mutual attention, positivity, and coordination (Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). When a judgment error is made the suspect is less likely to be responsive to the investigator, and responsiveness of the other party is an important feature of a satisfying



relationship (Canevello & Crocker, 2010), therefore disrupting the formation of rapport. Because of this suspects can report a greater amount of information, but less accurate information (Vallano & Compo, 2011). Oostinga et al. (2018a) also concluded that judgment errors lead to a greater quantity of information provision. All this information lead to the following hypotheses:

H<sup>1</sup>: Judgment errors made by the interviewer lead to less perceived rapport, trust and provided quality of information, but more provided quantity of information by the suspect than when no judgment errors are made.

### **Intentionality of the judgment error**

Judgment errors are thus likely to have an effect on the perceived trust, rapport and provided (accurate) information, but it is however unclear what the effect of intentionality is. As can be seen from the example of Adrian Thomas, police officers have used intentional communication errors in the form of lies in order to obtain confessions. In an experimental research from Perillo and Kassin (2011), they further investigated lying as an interviewing style. In their research they falsely accused subjects of pressing a keyboard key they should not have pressed, causing the crash of the computer. In reality this was not the case, the researchers were bluffing to their participants. The subjects were told that each keystroke was recorded, and that these could not be accessed until the next day. In the no-bluff condition, the subject was not told anything. The authors concluded that the false confession rate was significantly increased from 27% to 87% in the bluff group. In a similar experiment from Horselenberg, Merckelbach and Josephs (2003), but with another keystroke, 82% of the participants were willing to sign a false confession. These two experiments indicate that, in this case bluffing to the participants that their wrongdoing was caught on tape, made the participants provide more false information. It is also likely that intentionally made judgment errors influences both trust and rapport in a negative way. When interviewers make an intentional judgment error, they might try to solve a problem while a suspect is too high in emotions (Oostinga et al. 2018b). Interviewers can state that they know how suspects feel, while this is not the case. Suspects may therefore feel that interviewers are lying to them, since the situation could not be understandable for police officers. When interviewers make judgment errors in the form of a lie, they are seen as untrustworthy (de Mille & Hirschberg, 1972). Also, in order to build rapport, the relationship between suspect and interviewer has to be genuine (Williamson, 2013). When the investigator intentionally makes judgment errors, he or she is not likely to be genuine. Intentionally made

judgment errors such as bluffing therefore lead to more information exchange, whereas it does not necessarily mean that this is truthful information (Vallano & Compo, 2011). The following hypotheses is constructed based on previously mentioned information:

H<sup>2</sup>: Intentionally made judgment errors by the interviewer lead to less perceived rapport, trust and provided quality of information by the suspect, but more provided quantity of information than when unintentional judgment errors are made.

### **Effect of interview style on intentionality**

Finally, judgment errors in suspect interviews are always used in combination with an interview style. Whether it is either an accusatorial or investigative interviewing style, an investigator makes the (intentional) judgment error in a specific setting. As previously mentioned, when (intentional) judgment errors are made, it is expected that they have negative effects on trust and rapport formation and on the accuracy of the information provided by the suspect. It can be expected that these two interviewing styles differ in the influence they have on the perceived rapport, trust and provided (accurate) information of the suspect, since each interviewing style differ in the necessity of the formation of trust and rapport. In an investigative style of interviewing, building trust and rapport are critical steps, and are included in the Engaging phase of the previously mentioned PEACE model of interviewing (Abbe & Brandon, 2013). Macintosh (2009) states that building rapport is an important condition for the formation of trust. The author also states that self-disclosure is positively related to rapport, suggesting that the greater the rapport between suspect and interviewer, the greater the self-disclosure of the suspect. Additionally, the accuracy of the provided information is also improved, therefore improving the quality of information (Bull, 2014; Meissner et al., 2012; Vrij, Hope & Fisher, 2014). In an accusatory interviewing style, the goal is not necessarily to build rapport or trust, but to persuade the suspect to confess to their crime using closed-ended questions that confirm what the interrogator already believes to be true (Meissner et al., 2014). An accusatorial interviewing strategy is also associated with fewer details provision and admission rate of the suspect in comparison with an investigative interviewing strategy (Evans et al., 2013). On basis of this it can be expected that an accusatorial interview style has more detrimental effects in combination with an (intentional) judgment error on the perceived trust, rapport and provided (accurate) information than an investigative interviewing style. The following hypothesis is therefore constructed:

H<sub>3</sub>: Intentionally made judgment errors by the interviewer lead to more loss of perceived trust, rapport and provided (accurate) information from the suspect when an accusatory style of interviewing is used than when an investigative style of interviewing is used.

### **The current study**

The current study aims to investigate the effect of judgment errors on the amount of perceived trust, rapport and provided (accurate) information. Additionally, the effect of intentionally made judgment errors will be researched and the impact of judgment errors in combination with two different interviewing styles.

## **Method**

### **Design**

In this research a between groups study design was used. Participants were allocated to one of the 2 (investigative or accusatory interviewing style) x 3 (unintentional, intentional or control condition) experimental conditions. Participants were asked to imagine that they were accused of shoplifting and they had to perform an (suspect) interview, after which a questionnaire was filled out that measured two dependent variables, the amount of perceived rapport and trust. The other two dependent variables were the quantity and accuracy of information. Participants were also asked questions about how ethical they think making errors is, but since this is not part of this study it will not be discussed further.

### **Participants**

A total of 156 participants were recruited via researcher by using online media platforms, snowball sampling or via the university's research participation program. Inclusion criteria contained a minimum age of 18, fluent in either English or Dutch and the availability of a computer device with a webcam, microphone and internet. Six participants were excluded, since they did not notice the error being made by the interviewer while they participated in the intentional experimental condition. The participants were randomly distributed to one of the six experimental conditions by the researchers, resulting in a total of 25 participants per experimental condition. Of the total 150 participants, 80 were male and 70 were female with an average age of 35.07 years ( $SD = 14.26$ ). Nearly all of the participants had the Dutch nationality (99.3%), the remaining participant had the German nationality.

### **Materials**

#### **Questionnaire**

**Rapport.** In order to assess the interviewee's perceived rapport, the participants

completed the Rapport Scales for Investigative Interviews and Interrogations (RS3I) questionnaire that was published by Duke, Wood, Bollin, Scullin and LaBianca (2018). The RS3I is a multidimensional self-report questionnaire intended to measure interviewees' experience of rapport in forensic and intelligence interview. It contains 33 items and participants were asked to fill out a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The RS3I contains 9 subscales, namely General Trustworthiness, Attentiveness (how well the interviewer attended to what was said by the interviewee), Professional Expertise (interviewee's perception that the interviewer or interrogator has displayed professional competence), Professional Dedication (interviewee's perception that the interviewer has been professionally dedicated to the task of conducting the interview), Deep Respect, Trustworthiness Towards the Source, Cultural Similarity, Connected Flow (interviewee's perception that there was easy communication with the interviewer) and Commitment to Communication (interviewee's perception that he or she was motivated to cooperate with the interviewer). A scale was created by averaging the score of the items. The higher participants score on this scale, the more rapport they have experienced.

**Trust.** To assess the perceived trust of the interviewee, a seven-item trust scale was used. This scale was based on research by Robinson (1996) in which trust of employees in their employers is investigated. For this study the items were adjusted to some degree, to better fit with this study. For example, Robinson (1996) included 'my employer' in the items. This was replaced by 'the interviewer' in this study. Examples of items that are included in this scale are: "I believe the interviewer has high integrity" and "I can expect that the interviewer treats me in a consistent and predictable fashion". Participants used a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A scale was created by averaging the score of the items, the higher participants score on this scale the more trust they experienced.

**Quantity of information.** In order to assess the quantity of information that is given by the interviewee, several details were numbered in the scenario (for an overview, see Appendix H). These details were based on the notetaker system of Marlow and Hilbourne (2013). They developed Notetaker to provide a more consistent approach to the gathering of detail. The Notetaker system divides information into four categories, namely: People, Location(s), Action(s) and Time (PLAT). Examples of details were the eyewitnesses (People) in the supermarket (Location), the motive of the suspect and/or the actions of the suspect (Action) and the time and day when the participant is in the supermarket (Time). After the interview, the researchers assessed and counted the number of details provided by the participants. The more details the participants provided, the higher the quantity of information and thus information

provision.

**Quality of information.** Next to quantity of information, quality of information is also a factor that needs to be considered. More information does not necessarily mean more useful information. Therefore, the answers given by participants were also assessed on quality of information. This was also done with the help of the PLAT method of the Notetaker system, but this time the correct number of details that participants provided were counted. In total, 37 was the maximum number of correct details that could be provided by participants ( $P = 8$ ,  $L = 12$ ,  $A = 15$ ,  $T = 2$ ), since this was assessed beforehand by the researcher. After the interview, both researchers assessed and counted the number of correct details provided by the participants. The more correct details the participants provided, the higher the quality of information provided to the interviewer.

### **Procedure**

The interviews were exclusively done through online video calls to adhere to the covid-19 regulations that were in place when the data was gathered in The Netherlands. This study received ethical approval from the BMS faculty of the University of Twente (Application number: 210245). The participants received the scenario (Appendix A), information sheet (Appendix B) and the news article (Appendix C) that is in accordance with the experimental condition a day before the interview to read through and prepare for the interview. In this scenario the participants had to imagine that they were doing their groceries at the local supermarket. Since they were having financial problems, they could only buy their essential groceries. After collecting their groceries, they scan the groceries at the self-checkout cash register, and purposefully did not scan the laundry detergent and toilet paper since they did not have enough money but really needed these groceries. After exiting the store, they were apprehended by the police. Participants were asked to deny the fact that they were shoplifting, and that they were subjected to a suspect interview. They were also instructed to try to convince the interviewer of their innocence by answering all the questions and to prevent no comment interviews.

Participants were asked to pick a date and time to meet through a video call using Microsoft Teams. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental conditions, namely either an investigative or accusatory interviewing style with either an (un)intentional error or control condition. In the accusatory interviewing style, the suspect is immediately accused of the crime, told that the interviewer is confident that they did it and that the best thing to do for the suspect was to confess. In the investigative interviewing style, the suspect was asked questions about their involvement in the crime without accusing them.

Participants were instructed about the procedure and rules, and were informed about the structure of the interview. Additionally, in the accusatory interviewing a direct form of interviewing is used, with no time spent on making the participant feel comfortable. The investigative interviewing style spent time on creating a bond between interviewer and participants, trying to make the participant feel comfortable. Participants in the intentional error condition received a news article about police strategies in suspect interviews. This news article also described the usage of communication errors during suspect interviews, making them aware of a possible error that the interviewer (intentionally) could make. Participants in the unintentional error condition received also a news article about police strategies in suspect interviews, but instead of information about the usage of communication errors in police interviews they received information about general interviewing strategies, making them not aware of a possible error that could be made by the interviewer. Both intentional and unintentional error conditions contain the following judgment error in the introduction of the interview: “Over the last couple of days, we have arrested several people in connection with shoplifting. Just like you, they have shoplifted for the thrill of it”. The difference between the two conditions is thus that participants in the intentional error condition are made aware before the interview that the police make errors like these on purpose as a tactic. Participants in the control condition received the news article about general interviewing strategies, but without the previously mentioned judgment error in the introduction of the interview.

At the appointed time and date of the interview, the researcher welcomed the subject and gave the link to the Qualtrics site, where the scenario, information sheet and news article are once again provided. Enough time was reserved for the participant to read through these again to make sure they are properly prepared and to ask questions about things that were unclear.

After this, the consent form (Appendix D) was presented. The researcher hereafter turned off his camera and microphone, and the interviewer joined the call. The interview began with an introduction and consisted of two general questions about the crime, followed by four specific questions regarding possible evidence against the participant (Appendix E). An example of a general question is: “Please tell me in as much details as possible about everything that happened in the supermarket?” An example of a specific question is: “We saw you on the CCTV carrying more items than you paid for. Can you explain what you did with those additional items?” When all the questions were answered, the interviewer would refer the participant back to the researcher and left the call. The researcher referred back to the Qualtrics link that was provided at the start of the experiment, and asked the participant to fill out the

questionnaire (Appendix F) involving the measurables: demographics, experienced trust, rapport and ethics.

The debrief (Appendix G) was also presented within Qualtrics and participants had the opportunity to ask any questions about the current study and their participation in the study. Lastly, the experimental condition of the participant was verbally communicated as this is not shown in Qualtrics.

## Results

### Descriptive statistics

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, Cronbach’s alphas and inter-correlation of the studied variables. As can be seen from Table 1, variable Rapport has high internal consistency and variable Trust has moderate internal consistency. The characterizing values of Cronbach’s Alpha were classified according to Taber (2018). As expected, Rapport has positive correlations with Trust ( $r(148) = .66, p < .001$ ), number of details ( $r(148) = .19, p = .02$ ), and correct number of details ( $r(148) = .21, p = .01$ ). These findings suggest that when participants experience a higher level of rapport, they also experience more levels of trust, provide more details and provide more correct details. Correct number of details has also a positive correlation with number of details ( $r(148) = .82, p < .001$ ), this suggests that when participants provide more details, they also provide more correct details. Surprisingly, no correlation was found between trust and provided number of details and correct number of details.

Table 1.

*Means, standard deviations, Cronbach’s alpha and inter-correlation of the studied variables*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4
1 Rapport	3.73	.59	.94				
2 Trust	3.58	.61	.61	.66**			
3 Number of details	17.40	7.34		.19*	.14		
4 Correct number of details	11.43	6.39		.21**	.15	.82**	

*Note:* N = 150

\*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the level of 0.01 level (2-tailed)

### **Hypotheses testing**

For each of the four variables a two-way ANOVA was performed to test for effects of the judgment error (intentional vs. unintentional vs. control) and interview style (accusatory vs. investigative) on the perceived rapport, trust and provided (accurate) information of the interviewee. In order to test the prediction that a judgment error negatively impacts the levels of the variables in comparison with when no judgment error has been made (H1), a difference planned contrast was used. This difference planned contrast was chosen because in this way the control condition (no judgment error) could be tested with both the unintentional and the intentional judgment combined, and also the difference between participants who were exposed to an intentional judgment error and participants who were exposed to an unintentional judgment (H2). The interaction effect of two-way ANOVA was used in order to test the prediction that intentionally making of a judgment error negatively affects the variables when an accusatory style of interviewing is used compared to when an investigative style of interviewing is used (H3).

**Rapport.** Table 2 shows the means and standard deviations belonging to the participants' perceived rapport, trust and (correct) provided number of details of the six experimental conditions. The main effect of the judgment error was non-significant,  $F(2, 144) = .60, p = .55$ . However, the main effect of interview type was significant,  $F(1, 144) = 4.29, p = .04$ , indicating that the interview style has a statistically significant effect on the perceived level of rapport by the suspect. Participants exposed to an investigative interviewing style experienced significantly higher levels of rapport ( $M = 3.83, SD = .54$ ) than participants exposed to an accusatory interviewing style ( $M = 3.63, SD = .63$ ). The interaction effect was non-significant,  $F(2, 144) = 1.49, p = .23$ , suggesting no evidence for an effect of an interview style and intentionality made judgment errors on the perceived rapport. Planned contrasts revealed no significant difference ( $p = .32$ ) between when a judgment error is made and when no judgment error is made and the effect on the perceived rapport. Planned contrasts also revealed no significant difference ( $p = .65$ ) between participants who were exposed to an intentional judgment error and those who were exposed to an unintentional judgment error and the effect on the perceived rapport.



Table 2.

*Means and standard deviations (in brackets) of the dependent variables of the six experimental conditions*

Condition	Int/	Int/	Unint/	Unint/	Cont/	Cont/	Total interview style	Total judgment error				
	Acc (n = 25)	Inv (n = 25)	Acc (n = 25)	Inv (n = 25)	Acc (n = 25)	Inv (n = 25)		Acc (n = 75)	Inv (n = 75)	Int (n = 50)	Unint (n = 50)	Cont (n = 50)
Rapport	3.67 (.56)	3.77 (.48)	3.63 (.72)	3.70 (.55)	3.58 (.62)	4.01 (.55)	3.63 (.63)	3.83 <sup>b</sup> (.54)	3.72 (.52)	3.67 (.64)	3.79 (.62)	
Trust	3.56 (.64)	3.67 (.50)	3.37 (.72)	3.57 (.55)	3.47 (.65)	3.85 (.54)	3.47 (.66)	3.70 <sup>b</sup> (.54)	3.62 (.57)	3.47 (.64)	3.66 (.62)	
Details provided	14.88 (7.21)	18.92 (6.13)	14.12 (5.47)	19.16 (6.79)	18.36 (8.03)	18.96 (8.8)	15.79 (7.13)	19.01 <sup>b</sup> (7.23)	16.90 (6.93)	16.64 (6.61)	18.66 (8.34)	
Correct details provided	8.56 (4.86)	11.28 (5)	8.76 (4.58)	11.28 (5.78)	14.08 (7.28)	14.60 (7.99)	10.47 (6.18)	12.39 (6.50)	9.92 <sup>a</sup> (5.07)	10.02 <sup>a</sup> (5.32)	14.34 (7.57)	

Note: Int = Intentional, Unint = Unintentional, Cont = Control, Acc = Accusatorial, Inv = Investigative  
<sup>a</sup> = differs significantly from control condition

<sup>b</sup> = differs significantly from accusatorial interview style

**Trust.** The main effect of the judgment error was non-significant,  $F(2, 144) = 1.41, p = .25$ . However, the main effect of interview type was significant,  $F(1, 144) = 5.37, p = .02$ , indicating that the interview style has a statistically significant effect on the perceived level of trust of the suspect. Participants exposed to an investigative interviewing style experienced significantly higher levels of trust ( $M = 3.70, SD = .54$ ) than participants exposed to an accusatory interviewing style ( $M = 3.47, SD = .66$ ). The interaction effect was non-significant,  $F(2, 144) = .62, p = .54$ , suggesting no evidence for an effect of an interview style and intentionality made judgment errors on the perceived trust. Planned contrasts revealed no significant difference ( $p = .25$ ) between when a judgment error is made and when no judgment error is made and the effect on the perceived trust. Planned contrasts also revealed no significant difference ( $p = .22$ ) between participants who were exposed to an intentional judgment error and those who were exposed to an unintentional judgment error and the effect on the perceived trust.

**Quantity of information.** The main effect of the judgment error was non-significant,  $F(2, 144) = 1.18, p = .31$ . However, the main effect of interview type was significant,  $F(1, 144) = 7.62, p = .01$ , indicating that the interview style has a statistically significant effect on the

provided quantity of information by the suspect. Participants exposed to an investigative interviewing style provided significantly more information ( $M = 19.01$ ,  $SD = 7.23$ ) than participants exposed to an accusatory interviewing style ( $M = 15.79$ ,  $SD = 7.13$ ). The interaction effect was non-significant,  $F(2, 144) = 1.32$ ,  $p = .27$ , suggesting no evidence for an effect of an interview style and intentionality made judgment errors on the provided quantity of information. Planned contrasts revealed no significant difference ( $p = .13$ ) between when a judgment error is made and when no judgment error is made and the effect on the provided quantity of information. Planned contrasts also revealed no significant difference ( $p = .86$ ) between participants who were exposed to an intentional judgment error and those who were exposed to an unintentional judgment error and the effect on the provided quantity of information.

**Quality of information.** The main effect of the judgment error was significant,  $F(2, 144) = 8.69$ ,  $p < .001$ , suggesting that judgment errors have statistically significant effect on the provided quality of information by the participants. Planned contrasts revealed a significant difference ( $p < .001$ ) between the control condition ( $M = 14.34$ ,  $SD = 7.57$ ) and both the intentional condition ( $M = 9.92$ ,  $SD = 5.07$ ) and the unintentional condition ( $M = 10.02$ ,  $SD = 5.32$ ), indicating that making of a judgment error by the interviewer has a negative effect on the provided quality of information by the participants. The main effect of interview type was non-significant,  $F(1, 144) = 3.77$ ,  $p = .05$ . The interaction effect was also non-significant,  $F(2, 144) = .51$ ,  $p = .61$ , suggesting no evidence for an effect of an interview style and intentionality made judgment errors on the provided quality of information. Planned contrasts also revealed no significant difference ( $p = .94$ ) between participants who were exposed to an intentional judgment error and those who were exposed to an unintentional judgment error and the effect on the perceived trust.

## Discussion

This study further elaborates on previous research by Oostinga et al. (2018a) and Oostinga et al. (2018b) that researched the impact of judgment errors in suspect interviews. This study further extends it by looking at the intentionality of the error as well as the interviewing style. This study shows that the making of a judgment error has no effect on the perceived rapport, trust or provided details of the suspect. This is in contrast with findings of Oostinga et al. (2018a), who found that judgment errors lead to a decrease in trust, rapport, and information provision of the suspect. However, it did have an effect on the provided accuracy of information. When participants were subjected to a judgment error, they provided less correct

details than participants who were not subjected to a judgment error. Additionally, this study shows that there is no difference on the different levels of perceived rapport, trust and provided (accurate) information of the suspect when an investigator makes a judgment error intentionally or unintentionally (Hypothesis 2), or when different interviewing styles were used in combination with an intentional judgment error (Hypothesis 3).

A possible explanation for the fact that (un)intentional judgment errors did not seem to influence the perceived levels of rapport, trust and provided quantity of information (Hypothesis 1) is the fact that the judgment error made in the interview on itself does not have the power of influencing the perceived trust or rapport of the participants. Participants sometimes state that they did acknowledge the error, but did not respond to it because they did not really seem to care for it, and/or forget about it while filling out the questionnaire regarding rapport and trust. One participant also stated that she actually felt safer when a judgment error had been made, due to the fact that she thought that the interviewer did not really know the real reason why she committed the theft when the interviewer made the error.

It was stated before that in a diminished relationship the suspect is less likely to be responsive to the investigator, and responsiveness of the other party is an important feature of a satisfying relationship (Canevello & Crocker, 2010), therefore disrupting the formation of rapport. Oostinga et al. (2018a) did find in their research that judgment errors lead to a decrease in rapport, trust and provided information, so the fact that no effect was found suggests that the judgment error that has been made in this study was not impacting enough to affect the relationship between participant and interviewer, or that the judgment error was not experienced by the suspect as expected.

Interestingly enough, an effect was found between the making of a judgment error, so no difference between intentionality and unintentionality, and provided accuracy of information (Hypothesis 1). Participants subjected to a judgment error provided less correct details than participants who were not subjected to a judgment error. An explanation for this may be that when participants are confronted with a judgment error, they tend to react aggressively since this assumption of the interviewer (judgment error) do not match with their self-view. This is also known as ego threat (Nevicka, Baas & Ten Velden, 2016). In order to defend their ego, participants may be less willing to provide accurate information because they are confronted with contrasting views of the interviewer, that do not match their own views.

Since previous research showed that judgment errors lead to a diminished relationship between investigator and suspect (Oostinga et al., 2018a), it was expected that when a judgment error was made, participants would experience lower levels of trust and rapport. This was

however not the case, but interview style does seem to have an effect on the perceived levels of rapport and trust. When an investigative style of interviewing was used, participants experienced higher levels of trust and rapport in comparison with when an accusatorial style of interviewing was used. This is in line with the structure of investigative style of interviewing, since building rapport and developing trust are two of the key principles of this style of interviewing (Bull, 2014). Since the introduction of the investigative interviewing style interview in this study is constructed of rapport building techniques, such as explaining their legal rights and explanation of how the interview will be executed, this was expected. This may also explain why participants who were subject to an investigative interviewing style provided more details than participants who were subjected to an accusatory style of interviewing. This is since previous research shows that investigators who adopted an investigative style of interviewing are associated with higher responsiveness and cooperation of the suspect (Bull & Soukara, 2010). Other research add that in cognitive interviews, interviews that use an investigative interviewing style, suspects provided more correct details about the crime compared to suspects in a control group (Memon, Meissner & Fraser, 2010).

### **Limitations**

The first limitation is the fact that all of the participants in this study lived either in the Netherlands or in Germany. Inhabitants of these (western) culture differ in their response style compared to inhabitants with a different cultural background. For instance, research of Harzing, Brown, Köster and Zhao (2012) concluded that participants with an East Asian background are more likely to use the middle ranges of a scale while participants with a Western background are more likely to use the extremes of a response scale. Since only participants from a western cultural background participated in this study, the obtained results cannot be generalized and/or applied to countries with a non-Western background.

The second limitation is the fact that participants had to imagine that they were accused of shoplifting and were subjected to a suspect interview. This raises the question if the results are generalizable to suspects in real suspect interviews, since it cannot be known if participants in this study really felt guilty, as they did not committed the crime but had to imagine it.

A third limitation is that suspect interviews are usually not in an online form, and not in locations in which suspects feel secure and at ease. Participants in this study were instructed to find a location in which they feel comfortable to carry out the interview. A difference between real-life interaction and an online interaction is that although facial expressions can be seen from the interviewee, gestures and postures from the rest of the body cannot be seen via online interviewing (Bayles, 2012). This partial lack of non-verbal communication could influence the

formation of rapport and trust between the participants and the researcher (Sztompka, 1999; Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990). Participants in this study may therefore show lower levels of rapport and trust, and may provide less (correct) details, since they could feel less committed towards the interviewer in this online setting in comparison with a face-to-face interview. To summarize, the results found in this study may not be generalizable to real suspect interviews, since real suspect interviews usually take place in a face-to-face interaction and not in situations where the suspect feels comfortable.

A final limitation is that the suspect interview contained the same questions regarding the shoplifting for all participants in both the interview styles. This was done so that the results of all the participants could be compared to each other, regardless of the experimental condition. As a result, the questions in the interview sometimes did not match up to their corresponding interview style. For instance, after an accusatory interview the first question is ‘Please tell me in as much details as possible about everything that happened in the supermarket?’ This does not match up to questions asked in an accusatory interview, since these are often closed-ended questions. Although no questions were asked that matched the interview style, an effect was found. It can be argued however that when questions were asked corresponding to their interview style, a larger effect and/or different effects could be found, since suspect interview then are more comparable to real suspect interviews. In future studies, the questions should be matched to their corresponding interview styles. For instance, open, information-seeking questions should be used after an investigative interview, and closed-ended, confirmatory questions should be used after an accusatory interview. This may help to make the interview as authentic as possible.

## **Conclusions**

The present research applied a new angle for investigating the effect of the usage of judgment errors in suspect interviewing, and tried to explain the anticipated relationship between judgment errors and trust, rapport and quality and quantity of information. It is one of the first studies that investigates how communication errors as an information gathering strategy could be used in suspect interviews in a real-life setting, in combination with interview styles and intentionality of the communication error. This study showed that judgment errors negatively affect the provided quality of information, but no effect of intentionality (in combination with interviewing style) was found. This suggests that suspects provide more accurate information when they were subjected to a judgment error, but that intentionality of the error has no effect on the perceived rapport, trust and provided (accurate) information of the suspect. The obtained findings did support the effectiveness of an investigative interviewing

style. It became apparent that this style of interviewing creates more rapport and trust between interviewer and interviewee, and made the participants provide more information. Although no direct link was found between intentionality of the judgment error (also in combination with interview style) and the formation of rapport, trust and quality and quantity of information, the findings of this study should not be overlooked. This is because this study did provide evidence for the effect of judgment error as a strategy, but in future studies other facets besides intentionality of the judgment error should be considered. Altogether, this study is one of the first that tries to explore the potential of error making during suspect interviews, and more opportunities to explore this potential should be put into motion.

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## **Appendix A: Participants' scenario**

Half a year ago, the company you were working for was forced to downsize and unfortunately they had to let you go. Since you are out of a job, you live on benefits from the government. You had saved up enough money to last for several months, but since you did not expect that you are out of a job for so long, your savings have run dry. You are very worried on how to cope with all of this, and how you will get through the next couple of months. Yesterday you received yet another bill in the mail, and you wonder if there is going to be any money left for necessary things such as your groceries. You are thinking about postponing doing your groceries, but you realize that your cabinets are getting empty. Since you really need your essential groceries, you decide to go to the supermarket this afternoon.

At 4:00 PM on Wednesday you arrive at the local supermarket. In order to not forget your groceries, you made up a list on what to buy. After you grab your trolley, you grab the list that you made earlier that day at home to look for the groceries you need. You check the list and wonder if you have the money required to buy all the necessary things.

You start your groceries at the vegetables section and pick the carrots, cauliflower and spinach for the coming days. The next things you get are loaves of bread and eggs for the whole week. Next on the list are a couple bottles of milk and a bag of potatoes and rice. You calculate the prices in your head and think that you have just enough money and you feel happy for a moment. But then, you see that you still need laundry detergent and toilet paper.

### **Shopping List**

- Carrots
- Cauliflower
- Spinach
- Bread
- Eggs
- Milk
- Potatoes
- Rice
- Laundry detergent
- Toilet paper

When you put your laundry detergent in your trolley you check your bank account to see how much money you have. You should have just enough money, and continue on to the self-checkout cash register. At the self-checkout, an elderly man, a mother with her child, and a young girl are paying for their groceries. When you are almost done scanning your groceries, you suddenly realize that you cannot afford all your groceries, and start thinking about a solution for this. You definitely need the laundry detergent and toilet paper, and cannot remove any other items that are already in your trolley. You have already cut everything down to the bare essentials. After careful consideration, you decide to not scan the laundry detergent and the toilet paper. It should be easy enough to just move them from one side of the till to the other without anyone noticing. You pay for the other products and receive a receipt. An employee

randomly selected the elderly man to check his receipt before you. You think that this will make you less likely to be checked.

Suddenly, you hear someone call your name. You feel your heart thumping and quickly turn around to see an acquaintance. You feel relieved, because you thought you were caught. You greet your acquaintance and head for the exit where you say goodbye to the employee. While you were getting close to your bike, you hear the manager calling out for you. You turn around, and see that a police officer is already accompanying him. Quickly you dispose of the products you did not pay for in a nearby bin around the corner. The police officer walks towards you and says: Sir/Madam, could you please come with me?

## **Appendix B: Information sheet**

This research will investigate the behaviour of suspects during an interview with the police. We will ask you to take the role of a suspect of a theft.

There are 4 steps to taking part in this research.

1. With this information sheet you have also received a description of a crime. You will need to read this scenario and imagine yourself as the person who committed the theft. Please take the time to understand what is going on in this situation, why you commit this theft, and how you will approach the interview. Your task will be to try to convince the interviewer that you are innocent so you should prepare as though you really were going to be interviewed by the police. Therefore, you should be aware that you will need to prepare a cover story to try to explain away any evidence they may have against you. Only saying “no comment” or being argumentative will not help to convince them that you are innocent.

2. We have set an appointment for a video call through Microsoft Teams prior to sending this information and a researcher will explain the procedure and answer any questions you may have at the start of this video call. A link will be provided by the researcher to join a call through Teams. After opening this link, you will have the option to access Teams through the web-app or download the desktop app. If further help is needed with installing teams or the use of the program, we will be available to assist through the contact info found at the bottom. We recommend testing if Teams works for you and how it works before the appointment, as the link will be provided well in advance of the appointment.

3. During your appointment, the interviewer will first explain the procedure, and will give you time to read the scenario again and make final preparations. The interview will then begin. This will be about the crime that was described in the scenario. As a reminder, you are expected to take the role of a suspect of the crime and your task will be to try to convince the police interviewer you are innocent.

4. After the interview, the interviewer will leave the call and the researcher will come back into the call. This researcher will send you a link to a post-interview questionnaire that you can then complete. There is also room for questions while filling in the questionnaire as a researcher will be present. Questions related to the purpose of the study cannot be answered until the questionnaire is fully completed. After the questionnaire is completed, the researcher will also answer any questions that are related to the study and the use of the data.

BMS ethics committee: [ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl](mailto:ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl)

For question concerning the study or the handling of the data please contact one of the researchers: Gerrit Borst: [g.j.borst@student.utwente.nl](mailto:g.j.borst@student.utwente.nl) or Rien Jansen: [r.jansen-3@student.utwente.nl](mailto:r.jansen-3@student.utwente.nl)

### Appendix C: News article

The police are always looking for new strategies that could help suspects talk. By using different techniques/strategies, the police try to make suspects talk during interviews as more reliable information makes it easier to solve cases. They could use strategies like lying about the available evidence, look at body language or show sympathy for the suspect for committing the crime. *The most recent strategy in this department is the usage of deliberate errors. Investigators will pretend to misunderstand a key detail of a crime or even propose false motives in order to provoke suspects to correct these errors. This leads to unwittingly giving the interviewers more evidence.*

\*Intentional condition

The police are always looking for new strategies that could help suspects talk. By using different techniques/strategies, the police try to make suspects talk during interviews as more reliable information makes it easier to solve cases. They could use strategies like lying about the available evidence, look at body language or show sympathy for the suspect for committing the crime. *Some strategies work better than others, and differences in individual characteristics such as cultural or age must also be taken into account when law enforcement interviews suspects.*

\*Unintentional condition



## **Appendix D: Consent form**

Participating in this study does not put you at any risk and the study has been approved by the BMS ethics committee of the University of Twente (Application number: 210245).

We will record the Teams call so that we can analyse your responses. However, these recordings will only be stored on secure university servers, can only be accessed by the research team, and will never be made public without your consent. We would also ask to use the transcript of the recording and some of the video material.

Keep in mind that this a fictional scenario, but it is possible that being questioned as in a police interview can result in having feelings of discomfort or stress. You have the right to withdraw from participation at any time without giving any reasons for withdrawal. You can simply hang up the Teams call, the researcher will not call you back as we do not want to pressure you to continue. However, if you lose connection accidentally please contact the researchers for further instructions through the information below. All questionnaire and demographic data will be anonymised so that you cannot be personally identified and will be used for completing two master theses but may also be presented in an academic article or at an academic conference.

Anonymised questionnaire data, but not video recordings, will also be made available to the scientific community via the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io/>). However, we would like to reiterate data is only available in a completely anonymous form and you and your data will not be personally identifiable, and we will not make the recordings available to others. For further questions or any complaints, you can contact the researchers or the BMS ethics committee of the University of Twente:

BMS ethics committee: [ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl](mailto:ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl)

For question concerning the study or the handling of the data please contact one of the researchers: Gerrit Borst: [g.j.borst@student.utwente.nl](mailto:g.j.borst@student.utwente.nl) or Rien Jansen: [r.jansen-3@student.utwente.nl](mailto:r.jansen-3@student.utwente.nl)

I voluntarily agree to take part in the Interview and to answer the questionnaire and understand that have the right to withdraw from this study at any point and that your data will be removed if you leave before completing the questionnaire

- I am over the age of 18

- I have read the information sheet above and fully understand the purpose of the research



- I understand that if I complete the study my data will be kept confidentially and anonymously

## **Appendix E: Interview scripts**

### **Investigative interviewing style**

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

You can call me [NAME]. Before we start the interview, I would like to inform you about the procedure and rules. This interview is being recorded for both video and audio. This is so we can properly analyze the data and have a record of what has been said.

We will need to transcribe these records as well. So, to help with that process afterwards, it would be a great help if we try to not interrupt each other. When you speak, I will try not to interrupt you, and I hope you will do the same for me. Of course, if you have questions, feel free to ask them. And don't worry if I ask two similar questions, or if I ask you to repeat something. I just want to make sure we get as much information as possible and I want to understand everything that you say here today as best I can.

Now, the reason I'm interviewing you today is to talk about the fact that you have been apprehended by the police regarding shoplifting. In order to fully understand the events that have happened, it is important that you tell me everything you can remember. Every little thing is important, so please be as detailed as possible. My only goal here is to obtain the truth, so that is why I would like to give you a chance to tell your side of the story. Do you have any questions so far?

It is important that you tell me everything that you know, no matter how insignificant you think it might be. Please use as much detail as you can and do not edit anything out. I was not there, so I am not aware of everything that has happened. That is why I want to give you a chance to tell me your side of the story. Over the last couple of days, we have arrested several people in connection with shoplifting. Just like you, they have shoplifted for the thrill of it.

We will begin the interview now.

### **Introduction accusatory approach**

I am here to talk to you about the fact that you stole groceries. I am sure that you did not pay for all the products. Thefts like this can cause small shop owners a lot of harm. Now, this is a problem as you can probably see. So, I want you to do the right thing by cooperating and telling me about what you have stolen from the supermarket. We know you are guilty, and have evidence to prove this. So, the only right thing to do for you now is to confess. Over the last couple of days, we have arrested several people in connection with shoplifting. Just like you, they have shoplifted for the thrill of it.

### **Interview questions**

- Please tell me in as much details as possible about everything that happened in the supermarket?

- Is there anything else you can tell me about what happened in the supermarket from your point of view?

Now I will ask you some more specific questions. You may have already answered them, but if that is the case, please answer them again.

- We have an employee who says that you were acting nervously. Can you explain why this person felt that you were acting nervously?

- We have another eyewitness who says that you did not scan all your groceries, can you explain to me why he would say this?

- We saw you on the CCTV carrying more items than you paid for. Can you explain what you did with those additional items?

- Is there anything else you can tell us that might help us to understand what happened at the supermarket?

[After questioning]. Thank you very much. I have all the information we need for now. You can please stay on the call the researcher will rejoin the conversation.

**Appendix F: Post-interview questionnaire**

1. Age:

2. Gender:

3. Nationality:

**Part A**

1. I believe the interviewer has high integrity.

1            2            3            4            5

2. I can expect that the interviewer treats me in a consistent and predictable fashion.

1            2            3            4            5

3. The interviewer is not always honest and truthful. \*

1            2            3            4            5

4. In general, I believe the interviewer's motives and intentions are good.

1            2            3            4            5

5. I don't think the interviewer treats me fairly. \*

1            2            3            4            5

6. The interviewer is open and upfront with me.

1            2            3            4            5

7. I am not sure I fully trust the interviewer. \*

1            2            3            4            5

\* = Reverse coded

**Part B**

1. It is my impression that the interviewer is an ethical person.

1            2            3            4            5

2. I think that the interviewer can generally be trusted to keep his word.

1            2            3            4            5

3. It's my impression that the interviewer has high moral standards for himself.

1            2            3            4            5

4. I think that the interviewer is an honorable person.

1            2            3            4            5

5. The interviewer strikes me as a person of genuine integrity.

1            2            3            4            5

6. The interviewer paid careful attention to my opinion.

1            2            3            4            5

7. The interviewer was interested in my point of view.

1            2            3            4            5

8. The interviewer really listened to what I had to say.

1            2            3            4            5

9. The interviewer was attentive to me.

1            2            3            4            5

10. The interviewer does his job with skill during the interview.

1            2            3            4            5

11. The interviewer performed expertly during the interview.

1            2            3            4            5

12. The interviewer acted like a professional.

1            2            3            4            5

13. The interviewer tried hard to carry out his part of the interview.

1            2            3            4            5

14. The interviewer made an effort to do a good job.

1            2            3            4            5

15. The interviewer was motivated to perform well during the interview.

1            2            3            4            5

16. The interviewer respects my intelligence.

1            2            3            4            5

17. The interviewer respects my knowledge.

1            2            3            4            5

18. The interviewer values my point of view.

1            2            3            4            5

19. I think the interviewer is generally honest with me

1            2            3            4            5

20. I feel that I can trust the interviewer to keep his word to me.

1            2            3            4            5

21. I think that the interviewer would be honest with me, even if it wasn't in his best interest.

1            2            3            4            5

22. I think the interviewer has good intentions towards me.

1            2            3            4            5

23. The interviewer means what he says to me.

1            2            3            4            5

24. The interviewer and I have their culture in common.

1            2            3            4            5

25. The interviewer and I probably share the same interests.

1            2            3            4            5

26. The interviewer probably shares my culture.

1            2            3            4            5

27. The interviewer and the I worked well together as a team.

1            2            3            4            5

28. I would probably be willing to do another interview with the interviewer.

1            2            3            4            5

29. Communication went smoothly between the interviewer and me.

1            2            3            4            5

30. The interviewer and I got along well during the interview.

1            2            3            4            5

31. I was motivated to perform well during the interview.

1            2            3            4            5



32. I wanted to do a good job during the interview.

1            2            3            4            5

33. I felt committed to accomplishing the goals of the interview

1            2            3            4            5

## **Appendix G: Debrief**

Thank you for participating in this research concerning (un)intentional error making during suspect interviews. This research aimed to find if the making of errors, intentional or unintentional, had an impact on how much information is provided to police by suspects. It is expected that a suspect gives more information when they are confronted by an error that the interviewer makes. In this study an error is made about the reason why somebody would commit a crime and also by accident to see if this would make a difference. There were also two interviewing styles, the information-gathering approach and the accusatory approach. The information-gathering approach is based on getting as much information as possible and to create rapport, this being the positive relationship between the interviewer and suspect. The accusatory approach has the goal of obtaining a confession and is direct and harsh in its approach.

Besides the amount of information given by the suspect, other variables were considered, like trust and rapport. These two variables could play a role in why people provide more information or whether the making of an error has a negative effect on trust and rapport. It is also considered how ethical/acceptable behaviours of interviewers are perceived to be. The post-interview questionnaires were about these three variables. We will acquire knowledge on what effect the making of communication errors during suspect interviews have on suspects giving more information and their experience regarding these errors. Will the error make the suspect talk more or shut down and does this depend on the interview style being used? The results of this research could potentially help improve the techniques used in investigative and accusatory interviews. This could lead to more successful convictions as there is more information to work with. The researcher will let you know in which condition you were placed and answer any questions you might have regarding the study.

Hopefully you enjoyed taking part in this study! We are still in need of a few participants, so please do ask friends or family members to contact us if they want to take part. However, we would like to ask you to please not discuss this research with them before they have participated, as this could alter their results.

Feel free to contact the researchers with any questions or feedback that you may have.

Rien Jansen: [r.jansen-3@student.utwente.nl](mailto:r.jansen-3@student.utwente.nl)

Gerrit Borst: [g.j.borst@student.utwente.nl](mailto:g.j.borst@student.utwente.nl)

You have the right to withdraw your initial consent without any negative consequences. This will result in your data being removed from this research.

For further questions or any complaints, you can contact the researchers or the BMS ethics committee of the University of Twente: BMS ethics committee, [ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl](mailto:ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl)

**Appendix H: Details list**

<b>Detail</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	The reason why the participant would shoplift, motive. (e.g. the cabinets are getting empty, little or no money, loss of job)
2	Supermarket
3	4 PM
4	Wednesday
5	Made up a list on what to buy
6	Look at the list on what to buy
7	Wonder if participant has enough money
8	Vegetables section
9	Carrots
10	Cauliflower
11	Spinach
12	Bread
13	Eggs
14	Milk
15	Potatoes
16	Rice
17	Calculate prices
18	Laundry detergent
19	Toilet paper
20	Check bank account
21	Continue on to cash-register
22	Elderly man
23	Mother
24	Child
25	Young girl
26	Not scan the laundry detergent and toilet paper

27	Move them from one side of the till to the other
28	Pay for other groceries
29	Receive a receipt
30	Employee checks the receipt of the elderly man
31	See your acquaintance
32	Say goodbye to the employee
33	Getting close to your bike
34	Manager calling out for you
35	Police officer is accompanying manager
36	Dispose of the laundry detergent and toilet paper in a bin
37	Police officer request that participant comes with him/her