Rebuilding Bridges: The Effect of Accepting and Apologizing on the Investigator-

Suspect Relationship in the Aftermath of a Misjudgment

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25.06.2023

Abstract

The study examined whether a combination of accepting and apologizing after a judgment communication error in investigative interviews is more effective than a single response strategy in repairing rapport, (affective and cognitive) trust, and willingness to provide information. Students were asked to imagine being accused of exam fraud and were interviewed online by a fictional Board of Examiners member (N = 133). Participants were misled about the study's purpose and randomly assigned to one of four conditions. In one condition, the board member did not make a judgment error, but in the other three, she did and reacted with either an accept response, an apology response, or a combination of both. The findings showed that the judgment error decreased rapport and cognitive trust. However, no effect of the error was shown on affective trust or willingness to provide information. Further, by just accepting or apologizing after a judgment error, rapport still decreased. Accepting compared to apologizing maintained cognitive trust better than as if no error had been made. The combination of both, accepting and apologizing, showed no difference compared to the single response strategies. However, additional analysis showed that the combined response strategy was effective in maintaining the level of rapport and trust compared to when no judgment error happened, suggesting it may still be the most effective response. This study was the first to evaluate a combined response strategy after an error and found that errors adversely affected rapport. Possible subsequent research might be necessary to investigate the effect of a judgment error without an immediate response strategy and validate these findings.

Keywords: Investigative Interviewing, Communication Error, Response Strategies, Rapport, Trust, Willingness to provide information

Introduction

Within the criminal justice chain, investigative interviews are an important step. Depending on the purpose, scope, and content, investigative interviews are conducted to obtain evidence or information about the crime from an individual (i.e., a witness, victim, complainant, or suspect) during an investigation. This evidence or information is relevant for later judicial convictions. Applying the correct communication techniques in investigative interviews as an interviewer is important, as the outcome, justice, efficiency, and trustworthiness of any following criminal proceedings depend on the conduct of these interviews (*Convention against Torture Initiative | Reducing Risk of Torture CTI*, n.d.). Hence, police interviewing guidelines based on psychological research have been released, serving as a theoretical framework for the execution of investigative interviews. However, they often neglect human mistakes in communication that could happen to the interviewer at any point. Getting a suspect's name wrong, reacting inappropriately, or misjudging the suspect are communication errors that can occur in such a setting.

Such errors in communication can harm the relationship between interviewer and suspect. The relationship is, however, important for the interview's outcome (Oostinga et al., 2018-b; Vallano et al., 2015). As making an error lies within humans' nature, emphasis must be put on a working atmosphere that accepts mistakes and focuses on learning how to deal with this reality (Murray, 2016; Harteis et al., 2008). Therefore, the focus must lie on what the interviewer can say thereafter to make up for it. Responses by the interviewer to their communication error, such as if they apologize or accept the mistake, can repair the relationship, and sometimes even partly improve it compared to when no error happened (Oostinga et al., 2018-b). As until now response strategies were only studied in isolation from each other, the interest arises if a combined response that consists of different strategies might even be more effective in repairing communication damage caused by an error beforehand. Especially as we come to terms with a workplace that accepts human errors, it is crucial to try to learn from errors and understand how to work with errors in situations where communication is the key to a successful outcome in the investigation (Murray, 2016; Harteis et al., 2008).

In the following, investigative interviews will be elaborated on in more detail. Then distinct communication errors and response strategies will be differentiated and elaborated in their effect on the relationship between investigator and suspect. Lastly, a possible combination of response strategies will be proposed and unfolded.

Investigative Interview

The outcome of the interview may be favorable if the interviewer employs strategies to overcome potential obstacles. For example, during interviews, the suspect may exhibit reluctance to divulge information, which may present a challenge for the interviewer (Vrij, 2014). Nonetheless, interviews with potential suspects can generate significant investigative leads and, in some instances, admissible evidence for legal proceedings. Consequently, law enforcement and criminal control benefit from confessions made during investigative interviews. However, especially confession-oriented interrogation methods must be critically viewed. They usually coincide with tactics that are manipulative, which is one of the risk factors associated with unfair outcomes in a judicial proceeding, such as false confessions (Kassin et al., 2010). To prevent this kind of miscarriage of justice, law enforcement officers are encouraged to use non-confrontational communication strategies. Those focus on eliciting solely information by building trust, rapport, and enhancing the suspect's willingness to provide information, which are essential indicators for a positive relationship and a favorable interview outcome (Meissner et al. 2012; Vallano, 2011; Vrij, 2014). Therefore, trust, rapport, and willingness to provide information are of main interest for this study and will be further elaborated in the following sections.

Rapport

In therapeutic settings, rapport is a positive and warm relationship between therapist and client that includes mutual attentiveness, positivism, and cooperation (Tickle-Degnen et al., 1990; Bernieri et al., 1996; Leach, 2005; Myers et al., 2006). Rapport in an investigative interview may be built on any connection, favorable or negative, and should be maintained throughout the interview (Vallano, 2015; Walsh et al., 2012). This view is shared by Kelly et al. (2013), who defined rapport, in reference to a professional setting, as a "working relationship [...] based on a mutually shared understanding of each other's goals and needs, which can lead to useful, actionable intelligence or information" (p. 5). Hence, building rapport with the suspect is indicative of a positive and cooperative relationship, even in the setting of an investigative interview.

(Affective and Cognitive) Trust

Another highly desired aspect in a relationship of any kind is trust, as high levels of trust indicate a positive and cooperative relationship (Rempel et al., 1985). Trust is defined by Mayer et al. (1995) as the willingness to put one's faith in another person or group to carry out an important task when one knows they can't monitor or influence the other's actions. Moreover, trust consists of different components that are defined differently in the existing literature.

Mayer et al. (1999) understand trust as composed of ability, namely the "skills, competencies, and characteristics" (p. 124) of the influencing party; integrity being the perceived compliance to "a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable" (p. 124); and benevolence being the perceived good-will of the trustee. According to Johnson et al. (2005), trust can be mainly understood as affective and cognitive trust. Cognitive trust appeals more to the suspect's trust in an interviewer's rational and calculative attributes like competencies and competence, which include the concepts of ability and integrity employed by Mayer et al. (1999). Besides, affective trust refers to emotional and social elements and skills of the interviewer that demonstrate compassion for the wellbeing of the suspect, as before defined as benevolence (Johnson et al., 2005; Mayer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995; Rempel et al., 1985).

The above conceptualizations of trust by Mayer et al. (1999) and Johnson et al. (2005) profoundly overlap. Hence, although this thesis adopts the conceptualization used by Mayer et al. (1999) to determine the three factors: benevolence, ability, and integrity, to assess trust, Johnson et al.'s (2005) terminology of cognitive trust and affective trust will be exclusively used when defining trust in the following sections. According to this definition, affective trust considers benevolence a significant element, while cognitive trust is composed of ability and integrity as its primary factors.

Both affective and cognitive trust stem from the dependency of the trustor on the competencies and caring of the trustee based on an incomplete state of knowledge that Johnson et al. (2005) described as a "leap of faith" (p. 501). In an investigative interview, the suspect knows little about the interviewer in the beginning; hence, faith is a significant part of it. Consequently, the interviewee's perception of the interviewer's trustworthiness based on interactions is pivotal. Due to its emotional component, affective trust is significantly more constrained by personal interactions with the interviewer than cognitive trust (Johnson et al., 2005). As the core of affective trust is emotional confidence in another, it implies that when emotional ties strengthen, trust in the interviewers may extend beyond what is warranted by existing knowledge about them.

Willingness to Provide Information

Lastly, willingness to provide information refers to the suspect's willingness to disclose relevant and truthful information to the interviewer, which is shaped by a range of factors such as the individual's characteristics, the type of crime committed, and the situation (Kassin et al., 2004). A positive atmosphere is seemingly important to achieve this and entails making the suspect feel comfortable sharing details about themselves, which may be achieved by creating a non-threatening environment or building rapport (Beune et al., 2009). The latter has been

shown to have detrimental effects on the degree of disclosure, mainly through motivational and functional mechanisms. It may produce a more cooperative environment, causing the suspect to feel more connected and an integral component of the group, thereby influencing the suspect's decision to cooperate with the interviewer (Vrij et al., 2014). Moreover, rapport and the accompanying sense of comfort facilitate information recall (Fisher et al., 1992). However, the interviewer can also negatively influence the suspect's willingness to provide information, such as by making communication errors (Gudjonsson, 2008).

Communication Error

Communication errors may be one aspect that potentially affects the interview's success and impairs rapport, trust, or willingness to share information (Yarbrough et al., 2012; Clarke et al., 2011). Hence, investigative interviewers must address communication errors as well. In the following, different types of communication errors will be identified.

Up until now, there has not been extensive research available on communication errors in the setting of an investigative interview. However, the research of Oostinga et al. (2018-a) distinguishes between three errors made by police officers during crisis negotiations. Investigative Interviews reflect a similar degree of high-stakes interaction compared to crisis negations, as, in both settings, dialogue is essential to foster cooperation and achieve the officer's goal. So, the findings of Oostinga et al. (2018-a) are also applicable to this study's interview setting. The three identified types of errors are: (1) contextual, (2) factual, and (3) judgment errors (Oostinga et al., 2018-a). Contextual errors involve errors in the interview setting and procedures. One example would be if the interviewer used police jargon when speaking to the suspect. Factual errors are mistakes that are factually wrong, such as using the incorrect name when addressing the suspect. Third, judgment errors are subjective in nature, entailing incorrect interpretations of emotions and thinking. One example of a judgment error would be when the interviewer concludes the emotions or characteristics of the suspect wrongly purely based on their own opinion. Within the study of Oostinga et al. (2018-b), factual and judgment errors were further investigated in the context of investigative interviews. As judgment errors had a larger negative impact on the suspect's affective trust and rapport than factual errors, this former error will be focused on in this study.

The study of Oostinga et al. (2018-b) showed that the interviewer's rapport with the interviewer was damaged by an error. Establishing rapport in an interview is dependent on the interviewer feeling comfortable and cared for by the interviewee (Vanderhallen et al., 2011). Further, understanding the interviewee's problems, as understood by Norfolk et al. (2007) as empathy, plays a dynamic and vital role in establishing rapport. Thus, if an interviewer, e.g.,

assumes something wrong about the suspect, which often results from erroneously assuming something about the counterpart, it leads to a shortcoming of empathy (Oostinga et al., 2018-a). In other words, if the interviewee is misjudged, it is likely that they will feel less understood in their situation by the interviewer. Consequently, judgment errors made by officers harm the good relationship between both parties and may result in lower levels of perceived rapport with the suspect.

Furthermore, research showed that errors resulted in a violation of trust, impairing the relationship between the sender and the receiver (Kim et al., 2004; Kim et al., 2006; Lewicki et al., 2016; Oostinga et al., 2018-b). The highly contingent nature of trust in most social relationships makes trust fragile (Goldsmith, 2005). Vignovic et al. (2010) demonstrated that when errors are made, the receiver attributes less competence to the sender, which is an essential asset for cognitive trust in the interviewer. Incompetence decreases trust by demonstrating that the trustor's expectations will not be met consistently, indicating a lack of commitment (Goldsmith, 2005). As a result, a suspect would not have faith in the professional competencies after an error, as their fears became more concrete. Further, errors cause individuals to feel negative, and since emotions affect trusting behavior, mistakes may make people less trusting of the person who made the error (Mayer et al., 1995). As mentioned before, especially affective trust relies on confidence in a relationship that stems from emotions, and the need to trust is predicated on an incomplete state of knowledge. As, especially in investigative interviews, the stakes are high and trust is low, an error might have detrimental effects as it confirms initial negative expectations about the interviewer (Beune et al., 2009). Hence, in line with the findings of Oostinga et al. (2018-b), judgment mistakes may have a crucial impact on the trust that is created throughout an interview.

Moreover, communication errors can have detrimental effects on the suspect's willingness to provide information. It must be differentiated from the motivation to disclose information and the actual quantity and quality of information shared when considering the findings in the following part. Appealing to the motivation behind disclosure, Gudjonsson (2003) demonstrated that communication errors reduce a suspect's desire to disclose information. If trust is low towards the interviewer, the low trust might lead to a lower willingness to share information, as the suspect might not feel comfortable enough to be vulnerable and disclose information (Vallano et al., 2015). Interestingly, the study by Oostinga et al. (2018-b) showed that factual errors (compared to judgment errors) can ultimately lead to the suspect revealing more information—in this case, rather appealing to the quantity and quality of information provision. A possible explanation for the rise in

information provision that seems contradictory to the lower levels of rapport and trust was offered by Oostinga et al. (2018-b). It is assumed that the error, conversely, serves to encourage disclosure, as the suspect aims to correct the interviewer, thereby revealing more truthful information. Oostinga et al. (2018-b) further suggest that a judgment error could result in the suspect feeling threatened in their ego and, hence, wanting to correct the error urgently. According to Ren et al. (2009), a suspect who feels intimidated is more likely to draw attention to the misjudgment at hand, a symbolic demonstration of a belief that they are worthy of respect. As research suggests, being misjudged may lead to the motivation to defend oneself. Additionally, considering the findings on a rise in quantity and quality of information provision following an error by Oostinga et al. (2018-b), judgment errors will positively influence the suspect's score on willingness to provide information.

> **H1**: *In suspect interviews, a judgment communication error by the interviewer influences the suspect's score negatively on perceived rapport (1a), affective trust (1b), and cognitive trust (1c), and positively on the willingness to provide information (1d), compared to when no error is made.*

Research indicates that communication errors, including judgment errors, can have a significant impact on the suspect-interviewer relationship. However, it is important to note that the situation is repairable. Studies demonstrate that there are opportunities for repair and improvement even after an error occurs.

Error Response Strategies

Until today, there has been only limited research on how to respond to communication errors in the setting of an investigative interview. Oostinga et al. (2018-a) researched, in the scope of their aforementioned study, effective response strategies to recover from the damage made by such errors. The study distinguished four types of response strategies: accept, apologize, attribute, and contradict. The 'accept' response is an interviewer's admission that an error has indeed been made and a guarantee of future prevention. An example, derived from interviews with police negotiators by Oostinga et al. (2018), is "That was a stupid remark of mine; let's go back to where we were" (p. 21). The 'apologize' response involves the interviewer offering an apology and explanation by taking on full responsibility for the error, such as: "I am sorry, I think I did not hear it correctly. Can you explain that to me again?" (Oostinga et al., 2018-a, p. 21). The 'attribute' response involves blaming a third party for the error, such as, for example, "I misunderstood this from a colleague" (p. 21). Lastly, the 'contradict' response includes denial that an error was made. One example of this is "I think you understood me wrong" (p. 21).

The response strategies accept, apologize, and contradict were further investigated on their effect on the suspect's affective trust and rapport between suspect and interviewer, and accepting and apologizing proved to be significantly more effective in restoring damage caused by error than a contradicting response (Oostinga et al., 2018-b). Those findings are in line with findings of effective responses to trust violations in research in other domains, especially customer service. This domain is similar to the investigative setting of this study, as both parties are unfamiliar, their interests may differ, and both may fear risks and consequences related to the outcome of the interaction. It was found that it is more efficient to acknowledge the error by taking on full responsibility and offering an apology than to contradict it (Kim et al., 2006; Cui et al., 2018; Lewicki et al., 2016). The study of Hocutt et al. (2006) shows that the degree of taking blame can be a determining factor in restoring trust. Furthermore, the best combination for service recovery is high compensation, responsiveness, and empathy.

Interestingly, there was a difference in the results of accepting and apologizing on restoring rapport and trust in the study of Oostinga et al. (2018-b). Accepting the error was proven to be more successful than apologizing at addressing the damage caused by the error. In contrast to apologizing, the suspect's perceptions and actions after receiving an accepting response were equivalent to those of suspects who were not exposed to an error. Similar findings were found in research by Bies et al. (1987) as well as by Scott et al. (1968) that demonstrated the significance of verbally acknowledging responsibility for the violation as well as accepting it. Oostinga et al. (2018-b) concluded that an integral part of the reparation procedure is the offer to correct the false statement that occurs during an error, thereby preventing it in the future. However, apologizing may not demonstrate the same degree of effect at 'repair, as rapport and trust still' decreased after the apologizing response (Oostinga et al. 2018-b). Taking this insight into consideration, a different effect of the single response strategies can be expected. Whereas, compared to a no-error group, apologizing may result in lower scores on rapport, affective trust, and cognitive trust, acceptance may potentially result in a similar score.

As aforementioned, it is believed that rapport and trust may get partly restored; therefore, a positive and comfortable atmosphere might continue to make the suspect feel comfortable sharing details about themselves (Beune et al., 2009). Further, as the interviewer demonstrates acknowledging the misjudgment and accepting that they were wrong, the threat to the ego may diminish, contributing to a positive atmosphere (Beune et al., 2009; Ren et al., 2009). However, if those assumptions are wrong and the threat to one's ego from a misjudgment continues to exist, it would increase the desire to address and correct the misjudgment, hence

still leading to an increase in willingness to provide information (Ren et al., 2009). In other words, the suspect may then keep remembering the misjudgment and want to share information. This does not have to mean they want to make a confession in the first place but are rather willing to provide information driven by the motivation to prove the interviewer wrong. Based on this, it remains to hypothesize that after being apologized to or acknowledged for having been misjudged, the suspect will have an increased willingness to provide information.

Combined Response Strategy: Accept and Apologize

In interviews, reactions by officers after an error might be by nature more complex than just a single strategy, and, furthermore, research in other domains shows that a combination is most useful to restore trust (Lewicki et al., 2016). However, until now, response strategies were only studied separately for their effectiveness in this context. Thus, the main interest of this research is to unravel if a combined response strategy of apologizing and accepting is more effective in restoring the suspect's trust, rapport, and willingness to share information than apologizing and accepting as a single response strategy. To fit the scope of this study, one combined response strategy is selected for further investigation on its effect and interplay with communication errors: the Accept and Apologize Response Strategy.

The previously discussed literature demonstrated that response strategies function differently and, consequently, offer distinct advantages. Examining existing literature that describes the components of an effective response is essential when attempting to determine the optimal response. Further, literature demonstrated that the effectiveness of a response made after an error depends on the responsibility taken by the officer, the empathy shown by the officer, and the extent to which prevention of this mistake in the future is reinforced by the officer (Fukono et al., 1998; Dutta et al., 2011). Similarly, the study of Hocutt et al. (2006) demonstrated that it is most beneficial if the response is high in redress, responsiveness, and empathy, which equal the aforementioned dimensions of responsibility, empathy, and prevention.

Furthermore, these three key components of a successful response all seem important to restore especially damaged rapport and (affective and cognitive) trust. As described earlier, empathy plays a dynamic role in rapport; less empathy results in a lower score of rapport (Norfolk et al., 2007; Vignovic et al., 2010). A misjudgment demonstrates to the suspect that they are not understood by the interviewer, resulting in a shortcoming of empathy (Norfolk et al., 2007; Oostinga et al., 2018-a). This could be repaired by displaying empathy verbally during an apology and, hence, increasing rapport again. Addressing affective and cognitive trust, judgment errors harm the suspect's view of the competence the interviewer holds (Johnson et

al., 2005). This assumingly negatively influences the suspect's cognitive trust in an investigator's competency and trustworthiness, as well as their affective trust, as the incomplete picture of the interviewer that was utilized to predicate their trustworthiness proves to be wrong. Consequently, a more negative perception of the investigator arises, and emotional confidence decreases. However, if an interviewer takes full responsibility and assures the prevention of the mistake in the future, the suspect's perception of their competence and trustworthiness may be restored. Notably, empathy can also help to restore trust, as negative emotions elicited by errors negatively affect trusting behavior (Mayer et al., 1995).

With this taken into consideration, the defined response strategies seem to vary based on the three key components. Accepting and apologizing both demonstrate that the officer takes high degrees of responsibility; apologizing indicates that the officer displays high degrees of empathy; and accepting indicates a high degree of prevention as the officer assures that an error will not be made again in the future (Oostinga et al., 2018-b). Overall, combining accepting and apologizing may result in a better outcome than if only one of those strategies is utilized, as together they potentially restore more damage to rapport and trust by showing responsibility, empathy, and prevention.

Turning to willingness to provide information, a combined response strategy may restore more damaged elements essential to disclosing information than just a single response strategy. As hypothesized above, trust and rapport may be restored more as the interviewer shows responsibility, empathy, and prevention. Those three key components are contributing to a positive atmosphere that may make the suspect feel comfortable sharing details about themselves (Beune et al., 2009). As the interviewer demonstrates acknowledging the misjudgment and accepting that they were wrong, the threat to the ego may diminish (Ren et al. 2009). Concluding, combining accepting and apologizing may result in a higher willingness to provide information than if only one of those strategies is utilized, as they restore damage to rapport and trust more efficiently, resulting in a more promising atmosphere to disclose information.

> **H2:** *In suspect interviews, the single response strategy of 'accepting' after a judgment error will result in a higher score for the suspect in willingness to provide information compared to when no error is made.*
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> **H3:** *In suspect interviews, the single response strategy of 'apologizing' after a judgment error will result in a lower score for the suspect in rapport (3a), affective trust (3b), and cognitive trust (3c), and a higher score in willingness to provide information (3d) compared to when no error is made.*

H4: In suspect interviews, a combined response strategy of 'accepting and apologizing' after a judgment error by the interviewer will result in a higher score of the suspect in rapport (4a), affective trust (4b), and cognitive trust (4c), and a higher score of the suspect in willingness to provide information (4d), compared to the single response strategies 'accepting' or 'apologizing'.

Method

Design

To test the hypotheses, a between-group study was conducted comparing the effects of different response strategies on several dependent variables. The independent variable was the response strategy used by the interviewer, with four levels: accept, apologize, accept, and apologize combined, and control, in which no error was made and, hence, no response strategy was used. Each level of the independent variable was compared to the others in terms of its impact on the following dependent variables: perceived rapport with the suspect, perceived affective and cognitive trust in the interviewer, and the suspect's willingness to provide information.

In this study, participants were given an exam fraud scenario in which they were asked to imagine themselves as the student who cheated on an exam. Following that, the participants went into a chat in which they got interviewed concerning the exam fraud in a pre-programmed chat with an Examination Board member.

Participants

In this study, a total of 210 participants participated. To participate, the participants needed to be at least 18 years old, currently enrolled students at a university or an applied university and understand English sufficiently. The participants were recruited through the online survey platform of the University of Twente (SONA Systems), where they were granted SONA points (0.25) for their participation. Moreover, they were recruited by contacting acquaintances and sharing a link via social media (LinkedIn, Facebook) and the survey platform SurveyCircle. The study took place online, and participants were asked to participate on a laptop. All participants provided informed consent at the beginning and end of the study, and the study was approved by the BMS ethical committee of the University of Twente (230149). From the total of 210 participants, 78 were removed because four did not indicate consent at the beginning and two did not at the end. Further, a total of 63 were excluded because of incomplete responses and, therefore, did not indicate consent in the end. Another seven needed to be removed as they did not pass the manipulation check and could not get assigned to either of the conditions (see Manipulation Check). From those who failed the manipulation check,

two were assigned to the single response strategy accepting condition, one to the single response strategy apologizing condition, and three to the combined response strategy condition. Further, one participant was removed as they were identified as an outlier for the analysis of important variables. Exploratory analysis showed this participant indicated 5.0 on all items and 1.0 on the reversed item after it was reversed, indicating a high probability that the participant did not pay full attention and, therefore, was decided to be excluded. After the removal of participants, 133 remained (apologizing $n = 31$, accepting $n = 35$, combined $n = 31$, and no error $n = 36$). It was aimed at having at least 120 participants in total, with 30 participants in each condition.

The sample consisted of 92 females, 40 males, and one non-binary person aged between 18 and 28 years, with a mean age of 22.62 ($SD = 2.01$). From the 133 participants, 65 were from the Netherlands (48.9%), 26 from Germany (19.6%), and the others ($n = 42$; 31.6%) were from other countries. Most participants were coming from another university (than the University of Twente) in the Netherlands ($n = 68$) and from the University of Twente ($n = 36$); the remaining participants were currently enrolled at an applied university in the Netherlands ($n = 18$) or at a university outside of the Netherlands ($n = 11$). Most participants were students from the study fields of business ($n = 49$), psychology ($n = 33$), economics ($n = 20$), or sociology ($n = 10$), and the remaining students ($n = 21$) were from other fields of study.

Measures

Rapport

Regarding measuring the participant's post-interview perceived rapport with the interviewer, items of the Rs3i scale by Duke et al. (2018) were included. Three of the 21 items needed to be excluded as they referred to cultural aspects that were not of interest for this study: 'The interviewer and I have our culture in common', 'The interviewer and I probably share the same ethnicity', and 'The interviewer probably shares my culture'. The wording of the items was adjusted to fit more with the perception of the participant, whereas 'Examination Board member' was used instead of 'interviewer'. On a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), participants were asked to answer to what degree they relate to statements, e.g., ''The interviewer was attentive to me' (Appendix E). A score for rapport was calculated by averaging all scores on the items, where a higher score indicates a higher perceived rapport by the participant after interacting with the interviewer. The scale had excellent internal reliability, with α = .92 (George et al., 2003).

Affective Trust

In order to measure participants' post-interview affective trust in the interviewer, all 5 items of the subscale Benevolence of the performance appraisal system by Mayer et al. (1999) were

included. The subscale Benevolence was decided to be included as Mayer et al. (1999) conceptualized it as the "extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor, aside from an egocentric profit motive" (p. 124) and to care about the trustor, which forms the basis of affective trust and is in line with this study's definition of it (McAllister, 1995; Rempel et al., 1985). The wording of the items had to be adjusted to the study's setting, whereas 'Examination Board member' was used instead of 'top management'. Using this scale, participants had to indicate, using a rating from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), how much they disagreed or agreed with statements like 'I can talk freely to the Examination Board member about problems I experience' (Appendix E). A score for affective trust was calculated by averaging all scores on the items, where a higher score indicates a higher level of affective trust in the interviewer by the participant after the interaction. The scale had good internal reliability, with α = .86 (George et al., 2003).

Cognitive Trust

Furthermore, to measure participants' post-interview cognitive trust in the interviewer, 5 of the 6 items of the subscale Ability and 6 items of the subscale Integrity of the performance appraisal system by Mayer et al. (1999) were included. Mayer et al. (1999) stated that the subscale Ability measures the trustee's competencies and skills, whereas the subscale Integrity measures the belief that the trustee follows a set of standards that the trustee considers acceptable. Trustees' calculative and reasonable features, being competencies and integrity, are referred to as cognition-based trust (Kanawattanachai et al., 2002). One item was removed as it indicated a working relationship ('Top management has specialized capabilities that can increase our performance'). The other statements remained the same, but the elements were changed to fit a student-Examining Board member interview. Using this scale, participants had to indicate, using a rating from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), how much they disagreed or agreed with the statements: e.g., 'The Examination Board member is very capable of performing its job.' or 'I feel very confident about the Examination Board member's skills.' (Appendix E). A score for cognitive trust was conducted by averaging all scores on the items after the reversed item (of the cognition-based trust scale) was reversed, where a higher score indicates a higher cognitive trust in the interviewer by the participant after the interaction. The scale had good internal reliability, with α = .86 (George et al., 2003).

Willingness to provide information

Regarding measuring the participant's willingness to provide information, the three-item questionnaire of Beune et al. (2011) was included. The questions remained the same, but the elements were changed to fit the setting of a student and Examination Board member interview.

Using this scale, participants had to indicate, using a rating from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), how much they disagreed or agreed with the statements: e.g., 'I would provide a lot of information to the Examination Board member'; 'I would give truthful information to the Examination Board member' (Appendix E). The scores for each item were averaged, with a higher score indicating a greater willingness to share information. The scale had good internal reliability, with α = .82 (George et al., 2003).

Procedure

Participants were directed to the survey by following an invitation link they received online or after signing up for the study via the SONA systems of the University of Twente. It was indicated that the survey would take about 15 minutes to complete. To begin with, the participants were presented with a welcome screen and an informed consent form that they had to digitally agree to. If they did not give consent, they were excluded from the study, directly redirected to the end of the study, and thanked for their participation. When participants began the study, they were deceived about the real goal of the study, and a cover story was shared with them. They were briefed that the study was investigating how they will react when they are accused of fraud they actually committed and the effectiveness of different interviewing mediums (chat, video) during the interview; however, the study of interview errors was not disclosed to them. Deception was used to prevent biased responses to the error in the chat scenario, which will be described in the following.

Following the completion of the informed consent form, demographics and characteristics related to the university (e.g., study program) were asked of the participants. After asking for the characteristics, the participants were directed to a scenario in which they had to imagine themselves (Appendix A). The scenario included a detailed description of a motivated student who failed to study for an exam because a close relative passed away. The scenario expressed that the student still participated in the exam and explained the situation in front of the examination room that led up to the decision to commit exam fraud. According to the outcome of the aforementioned questions, the scenario the participants were opposed to was adjusted so that it fit as best as possible to the participant's real academic life, including their real study program (the study program that was indicated in the demographics was used in the description of the student). It is demonstrated that exposing participants to a scenario that is close to reality and their perception helps them to imagine the scenario (Evans et al., 2010).

After having read the scenario, participants were instructed to watch a short video (1:55 min) in which they had to imagine themselves to be the person from whom the perspective was filmed. The video showed how the student was standing in front of the examination room. As

the examiner leaves the scene, the student is alone and sees the exam question and answers lying open and unwatched. The student then approaches the questions, takes a photo with their mobile phone of the exam questions and the exam answers, and returns to the initial place before the examiner returns.

After having watched the video, the participant was presented with a follow-up scenario in which they had to take the perspective of the student again. The scenario illustrated that after the exam, the university started suspecting the student of having committed exam fraud and, hence, invited the student for an interview to discuss this matter via a chat session with a member of the Board of Examiners. The participants then got debriefed about the procedure of the following interview with a member of the Examination Board regarding the exam fraud (Appendix B). Additionally, they were instructed that it was not in their interest to tell the truth.

They then got directed to a pre-programmed chat where they were asked questions about the incident by the member of the Board of Examiners, which are presented in Appendix C. The participant was able to react to some questions with typing responses and to some questions with forced pre-programmed response options to ensure a good communication flow. All answer options are in Appendix D. The chat started with a broader opening message explaining once more the aim of the interview and the procedure. Then some opening questions were asked, including asking for their current performance ("Please tell me something about your current performance at university so that I can get a clearer picture of you"). Response options forced the participant to state that they are performing well at university, enhancing the previous scenario of a motivated student.

In the middle of the conversation, participants received either a judgment error with a following response strategy or no judgment error, depending on which condition they were allocated to. Participant allocated to either one of the response strategies were all exposed to the judgment error "So far, I think you look like an unmotivated student". Depending on their reaction, participants that corrected the misjudgment were presented with either one of the three response strategies accepting ("Yes, I have noted everything"), apologizing ("I had it wrong, my apologies"), or accepting and apologizing combined ("I had it wrong, my apologies. I have noted everything."). If the participant did not correct the misjudgment, which will be discussed further in the manipulation check, they just received the response "Okay, let me continue with another question".

In the middle of the conversation, participants received either a judgment error followed by a response strategy or no judgment error, depending on which condition they were assigned to. Participants allocated to either one of the response strategies were all exposed to the

judgment error "So far, I think you look like an unmotivated student". Depending on their reaction, participants that corrected the misjudgment were presented with either one of the three response strategies: accepting ("Yes, I have noted everything"), apologizing ("I had it wrong, my apologies"), or accepting and apologizing combined ("I had it wrong, my apologies. I have noted everything."). If the participant did not correct the misjudgment, which will be discussed further in the manipulation check, they just received the response "Okay, let me continue with another question".

Following that, all participants were asked further questions, such as if they committed the exam fraud ("Also, I want to ask you if you did perform the fraud that you are accused of or not?"). At the end of the chat, they were able to state if they had anything more to add, and then they were thanked for their participation.

Afterwards, the participant was asked to complete a questionnaire (Appendix E) to gain insight into their rapport, trust, and willingness to provide information. At the end of the survey, the participant got debriefed, and after being informed about the true nature of the study, the participant was able to indicate if they wanted to be withdrawn from the study (i.e., asked for consent again).

Manipulation Check

Included was a manipulation check to determine whether or not the participants noticed any errors. After the communication error ("So far, I think you look like an unmotivated student"), participants had four response strategies that served as the first manipulation check. Selecting the response option "No, that is not really true. I am actually a motivated student" or "I think you perceive my motivation wrong" indicated that they recognized the error. However, selecting the response options "You are right that I am an unmotivated student" or "I understand why you say I am an unmotivated student" indicated that they did not recognize the error which resulted in them failing the manipulation check. From the dataset, seven participants failed this manipulation check. Those participants further did not receive a response strategy as it did not fit the communication flow. Consequently, they were subsequently removed from the dataset as they did not meet the criteria for any of the four conditions (accept, apologize, combined, and control).

However, those that failed the first manipulation check were asked in the end if they recognized a misjudgment by the member of the Board of Examiners during the interview. If they indicated yes, they were asked to explain why they did not correct the member of the Board of Examiners during the interview. This was included due to interest in what might happen if a participant realizes the error but decides actively not to respond to it by correcting the member

of the Board of Examiners. Two of the seven participants were unaware of any misjudgment by the interviewer, while five acknowledged that they had indeed realized such an occurrence. These five participants were subsequently asked to elucidate the reasons for their failure to address the interviewer's misjudgment ("Can you explain why you chose not to respond to the misjudgment during the interview?"). The answers of the five participants were during the additional analysis separately transcribed and analyzed for underlying patterns. A grounded theory approach (Glaser, 2002) was used to examine the content of participants' answers to identify features (i.e., motivation, tactics, emotions, and expectations).

Results

To analyze the data, the statistical software R was used. The dataset was cleaned by removing metadata and excluding participants based on the exclusion criteria, as well as outliers, which were previously mentioned in more detail (see Methods).

Scale Reliability

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and internal consistency estimates (Cronbach's alpha) for all measures in our study, which were found to have acceptable ($0.7 \leq \alpha < 0.8$), good ($0.8 \leq \alpha < 0.9$) or excellent ($0.9 \leq \alpha$) internal reliability (George et al., 2003). To test if the correlations were statistically significant, a Pearson correlation was conducted. There were positive, significant correlations ($p < .05$) among rapport, affective trust, and cognitive trust, as well as among rapport and willingness to provide information. Further positive, insignificant correlations ($p > .05$) were found among affective trust and cognitive trust with willingness to provide information.

Table 1

Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations among variables

Variables	*M*	*SD*	α	1	2	3
1.Rapport	3.3	.6	.92			
2.Affective Trust	2.6	.7	.77	.64*		
3.Cognitive Trust	3.2	.6	.84	.80*	.62*	
4.Willingness to provide information	2.7	.9	.84	.15*	.11	.10

Note. N=133; *$p < .05$; Bootstrap 95% CI was based on 1000 samples

Hypothesis Testing

Communication Error Effects

When looking at the effects of the communication error, the following hypothesis was tested:

> **H1**: *In suspect interviews, a judgment communication error by the interviewer influences the suspect's score negatively on perceived rapport (1a), affective trust (1b), and cognitive trust (1c), and positively on the willingness to provide information (1d), compared to when no error is made.*

To answer the hypothesis, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), with no error (control condition) vs. error (accept, apologizing, and combined condition) as the independent variable and the four effective measures as dependent variables, was conducted to test for a significant difference between the two groups on the combined dependent variables. Further, to test for significance in the difference of means of the different measures between the groups, the analysis of variance (ANOVA) from the MANOVA was considered[1]. Also, for inferential statistics, the dataset was summarized per group (no error; error) in mean and standard deviation for each effective measure. This output, as well as the significance between the groups, is displayed in Table 2.

Assessing the effect of the judgment error on the effective measures (H1a-d), a statistically significant difference was found between the two conditions on the combined dependent variables, $F(4, 128) = 4.55$, $p = .002$. The results showed that, the error condition scored significantly lower in rapport than the no error group, $F(1, 131) = 15.61$, $p < .001$. For cognitive trust, the results indicated that the error condition scored significantly lower in cognitive trust than the no error group, $F(1, 131) = 5.62$, $p = .019$. There was no significant difference between the groups for affective trust, $F(1, 131) = 2.48$, $p = .117$, nor for willingness to provide information, $F(1, 131) < 0.01$, $p = .962$. Thus, the hypothesis was partly accepted (H1a, c).

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[1] As the sample size varied per group, a Welch's t-test was calculated additionally (Delacre et al., 2017). The results were almost identical to the reported outcome of the ANOVA.

Table 2

Means and standard deviations for dependent variables depending on the communication error (error or no error)

	Condition: Communication Error			
	No Error (*n* = 36)		Error (*n* = 97)	
Effectiveness Measures	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
1. Rapport	3.6***	0.5	3.2***	0.6
2. Affective Trust	2.7	0.7	2.5	0.7
3. Cognitive Trust	3.4*	0.5	3.1*	0.6
4. Willingness to Provide Information	2.6	0.9	2.7	0.9

Note. N=133; *p < .05, **p < .01, *** p <.001

Response Strategy Effects

When looking at the effects of the response strategies, the following hypotheses were tested:

> **H2:** *In suspect interviews, the single response strategy of 'accepting' after a judgment error will result in a higher score for the suspect in willingness to provide information compared to when no error is made.*

> **H3:** *In suspect interviews, the single response strategy of 'apologizing' after a judgment error will result in a lower score for the suspect in rapport (3a), affective trust (3b), and cognitive trust (3c), and a higher score in willingness to provide information (3d) compared to when no error is made.*

> **H4:** *In suspect interviews, a combined response strategy of 'accepting and apologizing' after a judgment error by the interviewer will result in a higher score of the suspect in rapport (4a), affective trust (4b), and cognitive trust (4c), and a higher score of the*

suspect in willingness to provide information (4d), compared to the single response strategies 'accepting' or 'apologizing'.

A one-way MANOVA, with the four response strategy groups (apologizing, accepting, combined, control) as independent variable and measures as dependent variables, was conducted to test for significant difference between the four conditions on the combined dependent variables. To test for the hypothesis of significant mean differences between the groups for each effective measure, a post-hoc one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed. By performing the Tukey HSD test, significant effect sizes of the effective measures between each condition were conducted. For inferential statistics, the dataset was summarized per group in mean and standard deviation for each effective measure. This output, as well as significance between the specific conditions are displayed in Table 3.

A statistically significant difference was found between the conditions on the combined dependent variables, $F(3, 129) = 2.02, p = .022$. Significant main effects were found for rapport $(F(3, 129) = 6.46, p < .001)$ between the conditions, and almost significant main effects for cognitive trust, $(F(3, 129) = 2.60, p = .055)$. There was no significant main effect found for affective trust $(F(3, 129) = 1.91, p = .131)$, nor for willingness to provide information, $F(3,129) = 0.09, p = .968$, between the conditions.

Assessing the effect of the response strategy accepting on the effective measures (H2), the results showed that, in comparison to the control condition, accepting expectedly led to significantly less rapport, $p = .002, d = -.51, 95\%$ CI [0.15, 0.87]. Further, there was no significant increase or decrease in the accepting group compared to the control group in affective trust, $p = .655, d = -.20, 95\%$ CI [-0.25, 0.64], cognitive trust, $p = .338, d = -.23, 95\%$ CI [-0.13, 0.59], nor willingness to provide information, $p = .999, d = .03, 95\%$ CI [-0.58, 0.52]. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected (H2).

Assessing the effect of the response strategy apologizing on the effective measures (H3), the results showed that, in comparison to the control condition, apologizing led to significantly less rapport (H3a), $p = .001, d = -.55, 95\%$ CI [0.18, 0.93], and less cognitive trust (H3c), $p = .033, d = -.39, 95\%$ CI [0.02, 0.76]. There was no significant increase or decrease in the apologizing group compared to the control group in affective trust (H3b), $p = .112, d = -.40, 95\%$ CI [-0.06, 0.85], nor in willingness to provide information (H3d), $p = .993, d = -.06, 95\%$ CI [-0.51, 0.62]. Thus, the hypothesis was partly accepted (H3a,c).

When testing for the effect of the combined response strategy on the effective measures (H4), the results showed that, in comparison to the accepting group, there was no significant increase in the combined group in rapport (H4a), $p = .449, d = .21, 95\%$ CI [-0.16, 0.59],

affective trust (H4b), $p = .899$, $d = .12$, 95% CI [-0.33, 0.58], cognitive trust (H4c), $p = .989$, $d = .04$, 95% CI [-0.32, 0.42], nor willingness to provide information (H4d), $p = .999$, $d = .02$, 95% CI [-0.55, 0.59]. Also, in comparison to the apologizing group, there was no significant increase in the combined group in rapport (H4a), $p = .293$, $d = .26$, 95% CI [-0.12, 0.65], affective trust (H4b), $p = .288$, $d = .32$, 95% CI [-0.15, 0.80], cognitive trust (H4c), $p = .504$, $d = .21$, 95% CI [-0.18, 0.59], nor willingness to provide information (H4d), $p = .964$, $d = .11$, 95% CI [-0.48, 0.70]. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected (H4a-d).

Table 3

Means and standard deviations for dependent variables depending on the condition

	Response Strategy							
	Control ($n = 36$)		Apologizing ($n = 31$)		Accepting ($n = 35$)		Combined ($n = 31$)	
Effectiveness Measures	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Rapport	3.6	0.5	3.1[1]	0.6	3.1[1]	0.6	3.2	0.7
Affective Trust	2.7	0.7	2.3	0.6	2.5	0.7	2.8	0.8
Cognitive Trust	3.4	0.5	3.0[1]	0.6	3.1	0.6	3.2	0.6
Willingness to Provide Information	2.7	0.9	2.6	0.9	2.7	0.8	2.7	0.8

Note. *N*=133; [1] = scores differ significantly from control; scores without superscript do not differ significantly

Additional Analysis

Qualitative Analysis: Participant's Conscious Non-Correction of Misjudgment

In addition to the cohort of participants who passed the manipulation check, the data of those who failed the manipulation check but were aware of the misjudgment when asked later ($n = 5$) were also subjected to analysis. A qualitative analysis was conducted on their responses, when asked to elucidate the reason for their conscious non-correction of the misjudgment. Two

distinct patterns of response emerged from the responses, which are displayed fully in Appendix F. Some participants deliberately refrained from correcting the interviewer as a tactical move aimed at avoiding arousing suspicion (e.g., "[...] providing too much detail would only lead to more suspicion" or "[...] it would just make me look defensive"). Others believed that correcting the misjudgment was not a suitable or productive course of action (e.g., "[...] it's better to acknowledge the judgment and go along with it, [...] I would not act like someone who itches for studying" or "[i]t would not help my case"). One participant pointed out that the interviewer was unable to accurately ascertain their level of motivation as a student ("she can hardly know that I am a [motivated] student or not").

Exploratory Analysis: Combined vs Control Condition

As there was no significant difference in the measurement's scores between the single response strategies and the combined strategies, but there were significant differences in the measurement's scores between single response strategies and the control condition, the same was tested for the combined strategy. Hence, it could be tested if the combined response strategy is effective to completely restore the damage made by an error, in other words resulting in the similar scores than the no error group. By performing the Tukey HSD test, significant effect sizes of the effective measures between each condition were conducted. When testing for the effect of the combined response strategy on the effective measures, the results showed that, in comparison to the control group, there was no significant difference in the combined group in rapport, $p = .179$, $d = .29$, 95% *CI* [-0.08, 0.67], affective trust, $p = .975$, $d = .07$, 95% *CI* [-0.38, 0.53], cognitive trust, $p = .557$, $d = .19$, 95% *CI* [-0.18, 0.56], nor willingness to provide information, $p = .996$, $d = .05$, 95% *CI* [-0.62, 0.99].

Discussion

This study aimed to determine the effect of communication errors and response strategies on rapport, trust, and willingness to provide information during suspect interviews. Until now, response strategies have been studied isolated from each other, but more extensive research on how to work with errors in investigations is crucial as we adjust to a workplace that accepts human error (Murray, 2016; Harteis et al., 2008). The aim of this study was to determine whether a combined response strategy is more effective than a single response strategy at maintaining levels of rapport, trust, and willingness to provide information.

Communication Error Effects

First, assessing the effect of the judgment error on the effective measures, there were differences between the group that received an error and the group that did not receive an error. Namely, participants that were confronted with an error scored significantly lower in rapport

(H1a) and cognitive trust (H1c) than participants that did not receive an error. Hence, as expected, an error had a negative effect on rapport and cognitive trust. This aligns with previous research highlighting the detrimental effects of communication errors on interpersonal relationships and trust-building processes (Vrij et al., 2008; Hartwig et al., 2011). Unexpectedly, no significant difference was found between the error and the no error groups in affective trust (H1b) or willingness to provide information (H1d), even though it was initially hypothesized that there would also be a lower level of affective trust and higher levels of willingness to provide information in the error group compared to if no error occurred.

There may be different explanations for why both groups did not differ in those measurements. To start with, looking at the findings for affective trust, a judgment error might rather harm competence associated with trust than elicit negative emotions that harm affective trust. This stands in line with the significant decrease found for cognitive trust and the literature that showed that when errors occur, the receiver attributes less competence to the sender, which is crucial for cognitive trust (Vignovic et al., 2010). As the study of Oostinga et al. (2018-b) used a similar judgment error, it is unclear why their study found an adverse effect on affective trust while this study found none. The response strategies used may explain this. It must be noted that, in this study, the groups with the error also received the response strategies; furthermore, only the two most effective response strategies (accepting and apologizing) were included (Oostinga et al., 2018-b). As mentioned in later sections, this lines up with a limitation of this study's design that must be considered. Based on this, it may be that both strategies are already repairing the damaged affective trust, as their effectiveness has already been demonstrated by previous research and literature. In other words, apologizing and accepting may be both successful at enhancing perceived empathy while addressing social and emotional elements, which are the core of affective trust (Johnson et al., 2005; Mayer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995; Rempel et al., 1985).

Regarding willingness to provide information, it may be that a misjudgment that was repaired by the interviewer with a response strategy does influence the quantity or quality of information provided, as found by Oostinga et al. (2918-b), but does not influence the motivation to disclose more relevant information. Hence, when being accused of a crime, your motivation to not admit it may not change even though you were misjudged. As most participants corrected the interviewer, they showed that they did want to correct them. However, their motivation to share more valuable information does not change, which sounds reasonable considering that this could result in making them more suspicious of the crime and that their

goal is to not tell the truth. Discovering this more in future research would give more clarity to this question.

Single Response Strategies Effects

Furthermore, the effect of the single response strategy accepting on the measurement variables was tested. Unexpectedly, the strategy of accepting the error resulted in significantly lower levels of rapport compared to the control condition. This is contradictory to the hypothesis (H2) and somewhat surprising, as accepting the error was initially hypothesized to mitigate the negative impact and maintain rapport. Looking at the literature, the unexpected finding may be explained by the violation of expectations or perceived incompetence associated with accepting the error, which could undermine the interviewer's credibility and rapport-building efforts (Goldsmith, 2005; Mayer et al., 1995; Beune et al., 2011). Interestingly, no effect was hypothesized for affective trust or cognitive trust between the response strategy accepting and the control group. It was assumed that, in comparison to the control group, verbally acknowledging responsibility for the violation could fully repair the damage caused by the error-damaged measures, which would have been in line with similar research (Bies et al., 1987; Scott et al., 1968; Oostinga et al., 2018-b). This study indeed found no significant difference between the control and accepting groups for affective and cognitive trust as well as willingness to provide information, which may suggest that an accepting response is able to maintain levels of trust and information sharing willingness among interviewees compared to those that are not confronted with an error.

Moreover, the effect of the single response strategy of apologizing on the measurement variables was assessed as well. In comparison to the control condition, the single response strategy of apologizing led to less rapport (H3a) and less cognitive trust (H3c). Looking at the literature, assuming something wrong about another person, a judgment error, will hinder the interviewee's feeling comfortable and cared for, which is, however, essential to establishing rapport (Vanderhallen et al., 2011). Unexpectedly, no effect was found for affective trust (H3b) or willingness to provide information (H3d) between the apologizing and the control group, suggesting that apologizing may also maintain affective trust and willingness to provide information.

Consequently, comparing the findings of both single response strategies may show that accepting is more efficient than apologizing, as it can restore trust completely. This would support the literature and previous studies findings. The study by Oostinga et al. (2018-b) similarly found that accepting the error was proven to be more successful than apologizing at addressing the damage caused by the error. In contrast to apologizing, the suspect's perceptions

and actions after receiving an accepting response were equivalent to those of suspects who were not exposed to an error. Similar findings were found in research by Bies et al. (1987) as well as by Scott et al. (1968) that demonstrated the significance of verbally acknowledging responsibility for the violation as well as accepting it. Also, it is interesting to see that even though apologizing may be less effective in tackling trust than accepting, it most likely does address damage related to affective trusting. This makes sense considering that apologizing entails verbally standing up for the mistake and showing compassion, and affective trust refers to emotional and social elements and skills of the interviewer that demonstrate compassion for the wellbeing of the suspect (Oostinga et al., 2018-a; Johnson et al., 2005; Mayer et al., 1995; McAllister, 1995; Rempel et al., 1985).

Combined Response Strategy

Furthermore, addressing the main point of interest, a combined response strategy resulting in higher levels of rapport, trust, and willingness to provide information compared to a single response strategy (H4) could not be proven to be true. It must be noted that only the two most effective response strategies were compared to each other (Oostinga et al., 2018-b). It could be assumed that, as the single response strategies were already found to be successful in repairing trust, there may be no significant difference between the single response strategies and the combined response strategies anymore.

Interestingly, during additional analysis, results showed that similar values were found compared to the control condition; hence, no significant difference was found in the control group. This could mean that through a combined response strategy, rapport, trust, and willingness to provide information are maintained to such a degree that they reach the same level as if no communication error occurred. This would underline the previous assumptions and literature that, when combining accepting and apologizing, the most effective mechanisms of both may be combined, and, therefore, trust and rapport may be completely restored. As no effect could be found on willingness to provide information in the first place, this measurement might need to be considered separately from that assumption. It may be that there is simply no effect of an error or a response strategy on the motivation for disclosure. This was already assumed earlier, and the findings of the response strategies seem to support this claim. A point of interest remains, as both single response strategies failed to maintain levels of rapport, and apologizing failed to maintain levels of cognitive trust compared to when no error was made. Therefore, it remains unexplained why no difference was found compared to the combined response strategy. Considering the results, a possibility may be that the statistical difference

between the mean scores is too small to result in significant results. However, further research is necessary to confirm this assumption.

Limitations

Turning to the limitations of this study, several aspects must be considered. One major limitation is that the study setup did not allow for testing the effect of a judgment communication error separately from the response strategies, as all participants received an error as well as a response strategy. Hence, it could mean that the response strategies were not effective in repairing affective trust, as no damage could be assessed solely by the communication error. However, it must be noted that to study error and responses separately, the study design must have been adjusted to include more condition groups (i.e., adding a group where only an error occurred but not a response strategy), but time and participant resources were limited due to the scope of a bachelor's thesis. Perhaps a solution that does not include adding a condition would be to test immediately after the error and again after the response strategy to detect the effects of both on the measures. In the future, it would be necessary to test the error separately from the responses, with a condition where no responses follow the error, to determine whether the measurements get damaged or not.

Moreover, it must be noted that to fully grasp the mechanisms of the error and the responses, it is important to consider the insignificant results of the study with precaution. The support for no effect between the groups on the measures must be considered in light of the possibility of the non-significant results demonstrating that the hypothesis may still be true but there is not enough statistical evidence to support it. It is important to consider both possibilities to avoid publication bias. To find more support for this study's findings, future research should replicate the study.

Further, the study design also limits its representativeness. The chat scenario and the fictionalism of the scenario in general fail to mimic the real setting of an investigative interview. In a real investigative interview, the interviewer and the suspect would be face-to-face, resulting in more representative and accurate findings. Furthermore, as the interaction was based on a chat and the responses were partly given and not free to choose, it may have decreased the feeling of not texting with a real person and led to participants taking the interview less seriously. The study was still conducted like this to generate a bigger pool of participants that could relate to exam fraud, which would have been difficult in a real setting. Also, it was assumed that letting a participant chat would lead to feeling more engaged in the situation than when watching a pre-recorded video, as done before in studies. This was assumed to enhance the level of being able to identify with the student in the scenario. Also, the conduct of the study

in this manner was feasible to meet the scope of a bachelor's thesis. Added to that, manipulation of a real investigative interview by including a misjudgment would have caused distress to the suspect and may have violated ethical guidelines. However, to test the effect of response strategies on recovering from an error further, they need to be applied and studied in real-life situations by police officers in investigative interviews.

Moreover, the study population shows a lack of representativeness. Participants were recruited based on convenience (i.e., sampling bias), and the sample size is very small; therefore, the study population does not represent the general population. Students were recruited via platforms that are accessible to mainly students, resulting in a sampling bias, but it must also be considered that the scenario was fitted to them and, hence, assumingly works best on this population. If more resources (i.e., time and tools) had been available, a larger sample size would have been possible. To avoid sampling bias, future studies should focus on recruiting a more diverse and generalizable population.

Conclusion

The main findings of this study highlight that the response strategy of accepting seems more effective than apologizing, as it completely seems to maintain levels of trust compared to making no error. Most effective is, however, the combined response, as it potentially also restores damaged rapport. Overall, the study provides insights into the complex dynamics of communication errors, response strategies, and their impact on the interpersonal relationship between the interviewer and the suspect. Thinking back to the initial research question, it provides answers, showing that indeed a combined response strategy may be more efficient than single response strategies in maintaining levels of rapport and trust. These findings hold important implications for academics studying investigative interviews. They contribute to the existing literature on the role of communication in the criminal justice system and shed light on the consequences of communication errors in suspect interviews. The study underscores the significance of accurate and effective communication between interviewers and suspects for establishing rapport and trust, which are crucial for eliciting reliable information. It succeeded in demonstrating the detrimental effects of communication error (misjudgment) in investigative interviews, but it gives ease to this matter by showing that by responding to an error in the right manner, the response may buffer potential damage and, therefore, levels of trust and rapport can be maintained. Also, the study demonstrated how important it is to consider combining effective response strategies, as they were proven to be most successful and errors are more likely to influence competence-associated trust than emotional-associated trust. This gives added value to the practices of police officers who are and will be confronted with how to deal

with human error in an investigative interview. The findings and shortcomings emphasize the need for ongoing research in this area to develop more comprehensive frameworks and guidelines for interviewers, ultimately enhancing the quality and reliability of investigative interviews in the criminal justice system.

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Appendix A
Exam Fraud Scenario A

We would like to ask you to imagine yourself in the following situation:

You are a motivated [assessed study program] student at the University of Twente. Today you have to take an exam. Usually, you are very motivated at university but because of the death of a close relative, you had only little time to study. You felt very sad and your thoughts were everywhere but not on the exam. You still show up to take the exam but you have only little hope to pass the test.

You arrive early to the examination room and no other student is there yet. The examiner leaves the room and the hallway you are waiting in. At the entrance of the examination room, you suddenly see the exam questions and answers on paper. The examiner left the block of paper with the exam questions unattended… Because you see no one else in front of the room and you have so little hope to pass the test you decide to take a quick look at it. You are nervous to get caught but you believe that it is not your fault that you could not prepare well for the exam.

Watch the video below to see exactly how it went...
    Make sure you watch the video on a Laptop.
    Adjust the volume so that you can listen to the sounds in the video.
    Please watch the whole video and don't pause.
    Select the highest quality of 1080 pixels.

It was filmed in the first person. So imagine this is what you see:

[VIDEO]

After having watched the video, please continue further in the survey.

Appendix B
Exam Fraud Scenario B

Imagine the following follow-up scenario.

Now it's a week later...

Some weeks later you received your grade, and it was surprisingly good, even better than your usual grades. However, the examiner realized that someone looked into the questions. She states that she can prove that someone has looked in the exam, because the sides of the blog of paper have bent over while it was just printed. She suspects you as you were the only person standing in front of the examination room when she came back. The Board of Examiners has noted this accusation about you, but is curious about your side of the story. Since the committee is quite busy, a member of the examination committee will speak to you via a chat session. This is the first time you have been suspected of such a crime.

We would like to know how you react when you are suspected of committing fraud and have actually committed it. It is not in your interest to give in, as this could lead to a decision from the exam or even the study programme.
We will now put you through to the Board of Examiners. A colleague of theirs will ask you a number of questions to assess whether you are telling the truth and whether or not you should receive a punishment.

To ensure the anonymity of the participants in the interview, we assigned the number 150 to you.

Please continue with the survey, so we can connect you with one of the members of the Board of Examiners. It may take a few seconds before we can make a connection with a member of the Board of Examiners…

Appendix C

Chat Scenario

Table 4

Overview of the Messages

Messages	
Opening Message	Dear student, we are here to discuss the exam fraud incident that occurred in your year. I have just been informed that you are accused of exam fraud. The examiner thinks someone looked into the exam questions and you were seen as the first person alone in front of it. Also, this grade stands out from the others which makes it look more like you are indeed cheating. However, I would like to hear your story. Soon I will have a monthly consultation with the Board of Examiners and I would like to include this immediately. Before we get into this, I'd like to double check some general information. Then, I am going to ask you some questions about the incident.
Opening Questions	1. 'So, you are a [assessed study field] that took part in the last exam. Is that right?' 2. 'Please tell me something about your current performance at university so that I can get a clearer picture of you.` 3. 'Okay, I got it. Now, let us talk about the day of the incident. What did you do that day?' 4. 'Alright, let us continue.'
Error	5. Judgment Error: 'So far, I think you look like an unmotivated student.'
Response Manipulation	6. Accept/ Apologize: 'I had it wrong, my apologies. I have noted everything.' 6. Accept: 'Yes, I have noted everything.' 6. Apologize: 'I had it wrong, my apologies.'

No Error	5. 'So far, you did look like a motivated student.'
	6. 'Okay, let me continue with another question.'
Following Questions	6. 'Next, I wonder if you have ever been suspected of exam fraud before?'
	7. 'Okay, I will mark that down as I think this is important to know for the monthly consultation with the Board of Examiners.'
	8. 'Also, I want to ask you if you did perform the fraud that you are accused of or not?'
Closing Questions	9. 'Thank you for answering this question. I believe I have enough information. Do you have anything else to add?'
	10. 'Okay, that is all I need to know then. I will contact you again in the near future to inform you about the procedure. Goodbye.'

Appendix D

Interview Flow

Error Group with Apologize Response Strategy

Interviewer: 'Dear student, we are here to discuss the exam fraud incident that occurred in your year. I have just been informed that you are accused of exam fraud. The examiner thinks someone looked into the exam questions and you were seen as the first person alone in front of it. Also, this grade stands out from the others which makes it look more like you are indeed cheating. However, I would like to hear your story. Soon I will have a monthly consultation with the Board of Examiners and I would like to include this immediately. Before we get into this, I'd like to double check some general information. Then, I am going to ask you some questions about the incident.'

Suspect: 'Okay, I am ready.'/'Yes, this is fine by me.'/'Alright.'

Interviewer: 'So, you are a [assessed study field] that took part in the last exam. Is that right?'

Suspect: 'Yes, that is right. I am a [assessed study field] student.'/ 'Yes, indeed.'/ 'That is correct.'

Interviewer: 'Please tell me something about your current performance at university so that I can get a clearer picture of you.'

Suspect: 'This year I had good grades so far and I am always interested to study and prepare well for lectures and exams.' / 'I would say performing well at university is important for me and until now I usually had good grades.'

Interviewer: 'Okay, I got it. Now, let us talk about the day of the incident. What did you do that day?'

Suspect: [TEXTFIELD]

Interviewer: 'Alright, let us continue.'

Interviewer: 'So far, I think you look like an unmotivated student.' (Error)

Suspect: 'No, that is not really true. I am actually a motivated student.'/ 'I think you perceive my motivation wrong.'/ 'You are right that I am an unmotivated student.'/ 'I understand why you say I am an unmotivated student.' (Manipulation Check)

→ if the suspect reacts to the error: *Interviewer*: 'I had it wrong, my apologies.' (Apologize Response Strategy)

→ if the suspect did not react to the error: Interviewer: 'Okay, let me continue with another question.'

Interviewer: 'Next, I wonder if you have ever been suspected of exam fraud before?'

Suspect: 'No. I have never been suspected of exam fraud before.'/ 'Yes. I have been suspected of exam fraud before.'

Interviewer: 'Okay, I will mark that down as I think this is important to know for the monthly consultation with the Board of Examiners.'

Interviewer: 'Also, I want to ask you if you did perform the fraud that you are accused of or not?'

Suspect: [TEXTFIELD]

Interviewer: 'Thank you for answering this question. I believe I have enough information. Do you have anything else to add?'

Suspect: 'No, I have nothing to add.'/ 'Yes [--> TEXTFIELD]'

Interviewer: 'Okay, that is all I need to know then. I will contact you again in the near future to inform you about the procedure. Goodbye.'

Suspect: 'Okay, goodbye.'/ 'Alright, have a nice day.'

Error Group with Accept Response Strategy

Interviewer: 'Dear student, we are here to discuss the exam fraud incident that occurred in your year. I have just been informed that you are accused of exam fraud. The examiner thinks someone looked into the exam questions and you were seen as the first person alone in front of it. Also, this grade stands out from the others which makes it look more like you are indeed cheating. However, I would like to hear your story. Soon I will have a monthly consultation with the Board of Examiners and I would like to include this immediately. Before we get into this, I'd like to double check some general information. Then, I am going to ask you some questions about the incident.'

Suspect: 'Okay, I am ready.'/'Yes, this is fine by me.'/'Alright.'

Interviewer: 'So, you are a [assessed study field] that took part in the last exam. Is that right?'

Suspect: 'Yes, that is right. I am a [assessed study field] student.'/ 'Yes, indeed.'/ 'That is correct.'

Interviewer: 'Please tell me something about your current performance at university so that I can get a clearer picture of you.'

Suspect: 'This year I had good grades so far and I am always interested to study and prepare well for lectures and exams.' / 'I would say performing well at university is important for me and until now I usually had good grades.'

Interviewer: 'Okay, I got it. Now, let us talk about the day of the incident. What did you do that day?'

Suspect: [TEXTFIELD]

Interviewer: 'Alright, let us continue.'

Interviewer: 'So far, I think you look like an unmotivated student.' (Error)

Suspect: 'No, that is not really true. I am actually a motivated student.'/ 'I think you perceive my motivation wrong.'/ 'You are right that I am an unmotivated student.'/ 'I understand why you say I am an unmotivated student.' (Manipulation Check)

→ if the suspect reacts to the error: *Interviewer*: 'Yes, I have noted everything.' (Accept Response Strategy)

→ if the suspect did not react to the error: Interviewer: 'Okay, let me continue with another question.'

Interviewer: 'Next, I wonder if you have ever been suspected of exam fraud before?'

Suspect: 'No. I have never been suspected of exam fraud before.'/ 'Yes. I have been suspected of exam fraud before.'

Interviewer: 'Okay, I will mark that down as I think this is important to know for the monthly consultation with the Board of Examiners.'

Interviewer: 'Also, I want to ask you if you did perform the fraud that you are accused of or not?'

Suspect: [TEXTFIELD]

Interviewer: 'Thank you for answering this question. I believe I have enough information. Do you have anything else to add?'

Suspect: 'No, I have nothing to add.'/ 'Yes [--> TEXTFIELD]'

Interviewer: 'Okay, that is all I need to know then. I will contact you again in the near future to inform you about the procedure. Goodbye.'

Suspect: 'Okay, goodbye.'/ 'Alright, have a nice day.'

Error Group with Apologize and Accept Response Strategy

Interviewer: 'Dear student, we are here to discuss the exam fraud incident that occurred in your year. I have just been informed that you are accused of exam fraud. The examiner thinks someone looked into the exam questions and you were seen as the first person alone in front of it. Also, this grade stands out from the others which makes it look more like you are indeed cheating. However, I would like to hear your story. Soon I will have a monthly consultation

with the Board of Examiners and I would like to include this immediately. Before we get into this, I'd like to double check some general information. Then, I am going to ask you some questions about the incident.'

Suspect: 'Okay, I am ready.'/'Yes, this is fine by me.'/'Alright.'

Interviewer: 'So, you are a [assessed study field] that took part in the last exam. Is that right?'

Suspect: 'Yes, that is right. I am a [assessed study field] student.'/ 'Yes, indeed.'/ 'That is correct.'

Interviewer: 'Please tell me something about your current performance at university so that I can get a clearer picture of you.'

Suspect: 'This year I had good grades so far and I am always interested to study and prepare well for lectures and exams.' / 'I would say performing well at university is important for me and until now I usually had good grades.'

Interviewer: 'Okay, I got it. Now, let us talk about the day of the incident. What did you do that day?'

Suspect: [TEXTFIELD]

Interviewer: 'Alright, let us continue.'

Interviewer: 'So far, I think you look like an unmotivated student.' (Error)

Suspect: 'No, that is not really true. I am actually a motivated student.'/ 'I think you perceive my motivation wrong.'/ 'You are right that I am an unmotivated student.'/ 'I understand why you say I am an unmotivated student.' (Manipulation Check)

→ if the suspect reacts to the error: *Interviewer*: 'I had it wrong, my apologies. I have noted everything.' (Apologize and Accept Response Strategy)

→ if the suspect did not react to the error: Interviewer: 'Okay, let me continue with another question.'

Interviewer: 'Next, I wonder if you have ever been suspected of exam fraud before?'

Suspect: 'No. I have never been suspected of exam fraud before.'/ 'Yes. I have been suspected of exam fraud before.'

Interviewer: 'Okay, I will mark that down as I think this is important to know for the monthly consultation with the Board of Examiners.'

Interviewer: 'Also, I want to ask you if you did perform the fraud that you are accused of or not?'

Suspect: [TEXTFIELD]

Interviewer: 'Thank you for answering this question. I believe I have enough information. Do you have anything else to add?'

Suspect: 'No, I have nothing to add.'/ 'Yes [--> TEXTFIELD]'

Interviewer: 'Okay, that is all I need to know then. I will contact you again in the near future to inform you about the procedure. Goodbye.'

Suspect: 'Okay, goodbye.'/ 'Alright, have a nice day.'

No Error Group

Interviewer: 'Dear student, we are here to discuss the exam fraud incident that occurred in your year. I have just been informed that you are accused of exam fraud. The examiner thinks someone looked into the exam questions and you were seen as the first person alone in front of it. Also, this grade stands out from the others which makes it look more like you are indeed cheating. However, I would like to hear your story. Soon I will have a monthly consultation with the Board of Examiners and I would like to include this immediately. Before we get into this, I'd like to double check some general information. Then, I am going to ask you some questions about the incident.'

Suspect: 'Okay, I am ready.'/'Yes, this is fine by me.'/'Alright.'

Interviewer: 'So, you are a [assessed study field] that took part in the last exam. Is that right?'

Suspect: 'Yes, that is right. I am a [assessed study field] student.'/ 'Yes, indeed.'/ 'That is correct.'

Interviewer: 'Please tell me something about your current performance at university so that I can get a clearer picture of you.'

Suspect: 'This year I had good grades so far and I am always interested to study and prepare well for lectures and exams.' / 'I would say performing well at university is important for me and until now I usually had good grades.'

Interviewer: 'Okay, I got it. Now, let us talk about the day of the incident. What did you do that day?'

Suspect: [TEXTFIELD]

Interviewer: 'Alright, let us continue.'

Interviewer: ''So far, you did look like a motivated student.' (no error)

Suspect: 'Yes, you are right.'/ 'I also think I am a motivated student.'

Interviewer: 'Okay, let me continue with another question.'

Interviewer: 'Next, I wonder if you have ever been suspected of exam fraud before?'

Suspect: 'No. I have never been suspected of exam fraud before.'/ 'Yes. I have been suspected of exam fraud before.'

Interviewer: 'Okay, I will mark that down as I think this is important to know for the monthly consultation with the Board of Examiners.'

Interviewer: 'Also, I want to ask you if you did perform the fraud that you are accused of or not?'

Suspect: [TEXTFIELD]

Interviewer: 'Thank you for answering this question. I believe I have enough information. Do you have anything else to add?'

Suspect: 'No, I have nothing to add.'/ 'Yes [--> TEXTFIELD]'

Interviewer: 'Okay, that is all I need to know then. I will contact you again in the near future to inform you about the procedure. Goodbye.'

Suspect: 'Okay, goodbye.'/ 'Alright, have a nice day.'

Appendix E

Questionnaires

Scale One (Rapport)

(Imagine yourself back into the situation where you chatted with the Examination Board member, and you are asked to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements in the context of this interview; you can respond on a scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5))

1. I think the Examination Board member is generally honest with me.
2. The Examination Board member did their job with skill during this interview.
3. The Examination Board member respects my knowledge.
4. The Examination Board member performed expertly during the interview.
5. I think that the Examination Board member can generally be trusted with their word.
6. The Examination Board member really listened to what I had to say.
7. I was motivated to perform well during the interview.
8. I feel I can trust the Examination Board member to keep their word to me.
9. The Examination Board member made an effort to do a good job.
10. The Examination Board member acted like a professional.
11. The Examination Board member paid careful attention to my opinion.
12. The Examination Board member and I got along well during the interview.
13. The Examination Board member and I worked together well as a team.
14. I wanted to do a good job during the interview.
15. The Examination Board member was attentive to me.
16. Communication went smoothly between the Examination Board member and me.
17. The Examination Board member was interested in my point of view.
18. I felt committed to accomplishing the goals of the interview in the interview.

Scale Two (Affective and Cognitive) Trust

(The next few questions are about the examination board member, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5))

1. The Examination Board member is very concerned about my welfare.
2. My needs and desires are very important to the Examination Board member.

3. The Examination Board member would not knowingly do anything to hurt me.

4. The Examination Board member really looks out for what is important to me.

5. The Examination Board member will go out of its way to help me.

6. The Examination Board member is very capable of performing its job.

7. The Examination Board member is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.

8. The Examination Board member has much knowledge about the work that needs done.

9. I feel very confident about the Examination Board member skills.

10. The Examination Board member is well qualified.

11. The Examination Board member has a strong sense of justice.

12. I never have to wonder whether the Examination Board member will stick to its word.

13. The Examination Board member tries hard to be fair in dealings with others.

14. The Examination Board member's actions and behaviors are not very consistent. (R)

15. I like the Examination Board member's values.

16. Sound principles seem to guide the Examination Board member's behavior.

Scale Three (Willingness to provide information)

(Imagine you are the student you just saw in the video, and you are asked to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements in the context of this interview; you can respond on a scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5))

1. I would tell the Examination Board member everything.

2. I would provide a lot of information to the Examination Board member.

3. I would give truthful information to the Examination Board member.

Appendix F

Additional Analysis: Full Responses

Table 5

Participant's Reasoning to Conscious Non-Correction to Error

P	Full Response
1	"How could I? If I did, it would just make me look defensive."
2	"I think adding on the little things, and providing too much detail would only lead to more suspicion."
3	"In that situation it's better to acknowledge the judgment and go along with it. If I cheated and got asked about my motivation I would not act like someone who itches for studying."
4	"It would not help my case due to the situation I was in."
5	"It was a hurtful/useless question since she can hardly know that I am a motivatal student or not."

Note. P= Participant