The Effect of Guilt Presumption Within Police Interviews

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Abstract

Almost 1% of the suspects in serious criminal cases are being wrongfully convicted and the number for less serious cases is even higher. The goal of this experimental study was to examine whether good questioning strategies of interviewers in investigative interviews can help avoid innocent people getting wrongfully convicted due to factors like guilt presumption and the halo effect, the latter being a cognitive bias which individuals sometimes encounter when forming impressions. To test this, mock interviews with $N = 35$ participants, who played the role of the suspect in a fictitious crime scenario, were conducted with two different groups of randomly assigned participants, a Guilt Manipulation Group, and an Innocence Manipulation Group. The manipulation consisted of telling participants either about the high likelihood of the suspect being guilty or innocent. Furthermore, the participant had to fill in questionnaires regarding their guilt judgement before and after the interview took place as well as more questionnaires after the interview measuring the halo effect and the rapport between the participant and the suspect. The result showed no effect based on the different groups which could be due to the fact that the guilt manipulation seemed to have a very weak effect at best. Furthermore, there was no correlation between guilt presumption and rapport but a correlation between the halo effect and later guilt judgement. This study builds upon existing research in regard to investigative interviews and aims to improve these in order to avoid wrongful convictions. The results offer insights into variables that might influence these kinds of interviews and offer groundwork to further investigate these in future research.

Keywords: investigative interviews, guilt presumptions, guilt judgements, trust, rapport, halo effect

The Effect of Guilt Presumption Within Police Interviews

One role of the police is to gather and test investigative information within interviews to help ascertain who is responsible for a crime (Dean et al., 2008). The reason for the importance of these interviews is that they can create leads and evidence that help bring justice to the affected individuals (Vrij et al., 2014). Conducting high quality interviews, decreasing the likelihood of false confessions, and using non-accusatory questions is essential and in the interest of society. Huff et al. (1986) conducted multiple studies across multiple nations and estimated that almost 1% of the suspects in serious criminal cases are being wrongfully convicted. For less serious crimes this number is even higher. While 1% may not sound like a lot at first, it is important to look at the total numbers of crimes. In the Netherlands, e.g., there were over 797,700 crimes committed in the year 2022 (*Crime in the Netherlands - Statistics & Facts*, 2023). Assuming that 1% or even more of these crimes would lead to wrongful convictions that would come up to approximately 7.997 wrongful convictions in only one year.

A significant percentage of these wrongful convictions derive from police investigations and/or interviews (Gudjonsson, 2003). One of the reasons why investigations can lead to wrongful convictions are wrong confessions by the suspect due to coercive interrogation techniques and tactics. Hence, it is extremely important to conduct investigative interviews as objective as possible to avoid innocent lives to get disrupted or even destroyed. Furthermore, when innocent people get sentenced this could also lead to guilty offenders not getting arrested and hence might offend again or go unpunished which would prevent genuine justice for the victims Gudjonsson (2003).

Identifying a suspect for an investigation can lead to a guilt assumption of the interviewer in regard to the individual being interviewed (Adams-Quackenbush et al., 2019).

This is also called 'investigator bias', which is a tendency to perceive suspects in investigative interviews as guilty (Meissner & Kassin, 2004). Assuming the guilt of a suspect before even starting the interview can have significant consequences for the course and the outcome of the investigative interview (Adams-Quackenbush et al., 2019). These consequences are an increased risk of the suspect denying what they did, a drastic decline in their cooperation and hence a decline in the interviewer's ability to gather relevant information in context of the investigation.

One aspect of how guilt assumption might be expressed in investigative interviews is through guilt-presumptive questioning and other coercive tactics, which can lead to false confessions from the suspects and an eventual miscarriage of justice (Kassin, 2005; Lassiter, 2004). In some countries like the Netherlands, police officers are permitted to and sometimes conduct guilt presumptive interviews (ter Vrugt, 2021). This can lead to them using accusations and coercive tactics to increase the pressure and to decrease the denials coming from the suspects during genuine investigative interviews (Griffiths & Milne, 2006; Moston & Engelberg, 1993). Similar to this, a study conducted by Adams-Quackenbush et al. (2020) showed that biased interviewers were more likely to formulate their questions in an accusatory way compared to interviewers without guilt presumptions. Accusatory questions (e.g., "Your reaction makes me think that you are hiding something from me.") have their downsides in comparison to open-ended questions (e.g., "Can you tell me as detailed as possible what you did last weekend?") (Vrij & Granhag, 2012). This is because they can lead to the suspect responding with short denials instead of providing more details. Furthermore, accusatory questions can lead to the suspect displaying strong nonverbal reactions, whether they are guilty or innocent (Vrij et al., 2006).

Being falsely accused of something can produce a great quantity of anxiety in the suspect. The interviewer could wrongly interpret this kind of behaviour by interpreting the anxiety of the suspect as a reaction of a guilty person getting caught. Moreover, a meta-analysis of different research showed that using open-ended questions increased the likelihood of true confessions and decreased the likelihood of false confessions while using accusatory questions increased the likelihood of both types of confessions (Meissner et al., 2012).

In addition to these accusatory questions, interviewers who were biased at the beginning of the interview were less likely to change their mind during and at the end of it. One reason for this could be the phenomena of confirmation bias. According to Nickerson (1998), confirmation bias relates to individuals trying to find or understand evidence to a degree which validates their beliefs, expectations, or hypothesis. This can include both the active seeking for information that will confirm one's belief but also the ignorance of confirmation that might disconfirm one's belief.

Confirmation bias in the context of investigative interviews could lead to the interviewers ignoring the details giving by the suspect and only focusing on information that confirms their guilt assumptions (Hill et al., 2008). Kassin, Goldstein, and Savitsky (2003) evaluated this in a forensic context and their results showed that interviewers previously primed to believe the suspect was guilty tried harder to get a confession and put more pressure on the suspect than interviewers primed to believe that the suspect was innocent. Furthermore, the interviewers primed with guilt perceived the suspects to be more defensive and were more likely to judge them guilty. One possible explanation for this could be that the participants playing the role of the interviewer tried to confirm their belief of the suspect being guilty by interpreting their behaviour as more defensive and hence later judge them to be guilty (Kassin, Goldstein, and Savitsky, 2003).

Since guilt presumption seems to have a significant effect on the way interviewers behave towards the suspect and hence influence the outcome of the investigative interviews, this study will evaluate whether good and standardized questioning methods would reduce the risks of the societal harms caused by wrongly conducted investigative interviews. Standardized questioning methods in this context relates to the use of a script of open questions which remain the same across interviews.

The reasoning for believing that this technique could help improve investigative interviews derives from the theories regarding confirmation bias. Since confirmation bias can take the form of trying to find evidence to prove one's belief to be true (Nickerson, 1998), in investigative interviews this could take the form of asking accusatory questions and not giving the suspect the chance to explain themselves in an attempt to get a confession. This could in turn negatively influence the outcome of the interview. Providing the interviewer with a fixed script on which questions to ask takes away this possible risk since the questions are purposefully formulated in a neutral and open way. At the same time, these questions provide equal opportunities for suspects across interviews to provide explanations and hence defend themselves. By doing this, this study combines existing research on confirmation bias and investigative interviews to eventually find out more about their connections and how to use this knowledge to improve investigative interviews.

Since the questions asked during the interview will be standardized and the answers coming from the suspect will remain the same across interviews, a possible difference in guilt judgement between the Guilt Manipulation and the Innocence Manipulation Group likely derives from other variables like, e.g., guilt presumption. While confirmation bias due to guilt presumption might be one possible aspect for how this can influence guilt judgement, it is by far not the only one. Another possible aspect is the halo effect.

Halo Effect

The halo effect is a cognitive bias which to an extent is similar to the confirmation bias and can occur when individuals form impressions about other individuals (Pohl, 2016). It is similar in so far that individuals experiencing the halo effect make judgements, e.g., about the other individual's overall traits based on their first impression or what they already know about them. This happens even when what is known about the individual in question is not related to the judgements that are made. For example, if someone knows that another person is nice they are likely to assume that this person also possesses other positive personality traits like being funny or empathic. These judgements could be interpreted as existing beliefs that an individual has about someone else which they want to confirm by assuming that these beliefs are true, which would be close to the confirmation bias.

In regard to investigative interviews, this could mean that the interviewer forms their judgements about the guilt of the interviewee based on known characteristics of that person or even without this knowledge of any attributes. In case of a known bad trait leading to the assumption of even more negative traits, this is also called the devil effect (Pohl, 2016). Guilt assumption could be for example the kind of information which could lead to the interviewer developing negative assumptions about the suspect and ultimately influence their judgement. Cheung and Lagnado (2023) conducted a study investigating whether character information would affect the way individuals make judgements about blame, guilt, and intentionality in a mock court case. Their results partially supported this. While character information did influence the initial judgement of the participants, it changed after they received more information about the case. Even though it was only partially supported, the results of this study could still be a result of a reversed halo effect since the judgements at the beginning of the study were influenced by the provided character information.

Another study in which the halo effect and its effect on guilt judgement has been investigated was conducted by Sigall & Ostrove (1975). In their study, they explored whether the attractiveness of the suspect would influence the sentence individuals would give them for a crime unrelated to attractiveness. The results showed that individuals were more tolerant in their decision when it came to attractive suspects in comparison to unattractive ones. Since the attractiveness of the suspect was theoretically completely unrelated to whether the suspect is guilty or innocent, but this still seemed to have had an influence on the participant's decision, this could be a sign of the halo effect.

This research explores how guilt presumption can affect investigative interviews and later guilt judgements. Previous research shows that there is a connection between the halo effect and guilt judgement (Sigall & Ostrove, 1975). However, since most of this research focuses on court trials and does not explore whether guilt presumption has an influence on the halo effect, this study will address this research gap. To be more concise, in this study it will be tested whether the guilt assumption triggers a reversed halo effect, and whether these negative assumptions about the suspects traits compound any bias against the suspect. Simultaneously, it will be tested whether the innocence assumption triggers a standard halo effect for the Innocence Manipulation Group. Hence, this study will evaluate the halo effect to test whether this phenomenon, next to confirmation bias, plays a role in investigative interviews and whether it is correlated to guilt judgement.

Whether it is in court cases or during investigative interviews, the individual in charge of making judgements should solely focus on the evidence provided for the case and the statements and behaviour from the suspect and no other irrelevant traits when it comes to guilt judgement. To further strengthen this in the study, the answers and behaviours displayed by the suspect will be the same across conditions so that any differences in guilt judgement

cannot be attributed to genuine differences between innocent and guilty individuals. While it will be tested whether positive evaluations of a person's character differ based on guilt presumption regardless of the suspect's behaviour being identical across conditions, it will also be evaluated whether there are also biased interpretations of the quality of the relationship between the interviewer and the suspect.

Relationship between Interviewer and Interviewee

Another aspect of how guilt presumption might influence the outcomes of investigative interviews is through the relationship between the interviewer and the suspect. A positive relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee can have a positive effect on the outcome of the interview (Abbe & Brandon, 2013). However, there is evidence that interviewers are poor at judging rapport and one reason for this might be that their prior expectations bias judgements (Richardson & Nash, 2021). This could be due to the fact that it is harder for individuals to be non-judgemental and empathetic towards suspects they perceive to be guilty (Soukara et al., 2002). Both of those are important aspects when it comes to the building of a positive relationship. Due to the importance of rapport in investigative interviews, this paper will focus on one main outcome variable of relationships, namely rapport.

Rapport describes the positive interaction between, in this case, the interviewer and the suspect (Abbe & Brandon, 2013). A successful building of rapport can increase the amount of information collected during the interview, lead to more cooperation and help in negotiations to come to a faster agreement. However, even though rapport can have such positive effects on investigative interviews, interviewers like police officers often fail to build a proper form of rapport (Abbe & Brandon, 2013). Since during this study the questions and answers will be the same in both guilt conditions and are therefore being controlled, a

possible explanation for differences in rapport could be a biased perception of the interviewer due to the guilt or innocence manipulation. This biased perception in turn could be a result of the halo effect. As discussed above it might be possible that guilt presumption has an effect on the halo effect which again could influence guilt judgement and the rapport between the interviewer and the suspect. Hence, assuming that the suspect is guilty, or innocent could lead to different assumptions from the interviewer towards the suspect which in turn could influence the rapport between them. Ultimately, this could lead to differences between the two conditions.

Purpose of this Study

Investigative interviews are a crucial part of investigations. Therefore, it is important to make sure that these interviews do not get influenced by other variables irrelevant to the guilt judgement. Guilt presumption can possibly have an effect on guilt judgements directly but also influence judgements of rapport and other judgements about the suspect via the halo effect. Hence, if someone assumes guilt they might make negative assumption about someone's character which would be a reversed halo effect. Furthermore, individuals might perceive an interaction with a person they assume to be guilty as being less positive because, e.g., the suspect accused of being guilty might be less willing to share information. This could hence decrease the perceived rapport. These variables may intensify the extent of any biases if they are associated with guilt itself. This study aims to test the aforementioned variables to find out if they do have an effect on these types of interviews and if so to discuss how this could influence future research.

In result to this, the research question is the following. How does guilt presumption impact the interviewer's perception of the suspect during an investigative interview?

Hypotheses

H1: Interviewers presuming guilt prior to the interview will be more likely to assume innocent suspects are guilty after the interview.

H2: Interviewers are more likely to assume that suspects are innocent when they assign positive traits to the suspect.

H3: When interviewers presume guilt, the perceived rapport will be reduced in the interviewer after the interview.

Methods

Design and Manipulation

This study is an experimental design with *guilt presumption* (*Innocence Manipulation Group* versus *Guilt Manipulation Group*) as the independent variable and the *halo effect*, *guilt judgement* and *rapport* as dependent variables.

Participants

The participants were recruited via an institutional test-subject system called SONA. Through this, participants could earn points which they can use for their studies. Additionally, participants were recruited through the researcher's social media channels (i.e., Instagram, WhatsApp). Apart from the SONA points participants received no incentive. Requirements for participation were sufficient English language skills in both reading and speaking. Their English was considered sufficient when the participants were able to complete the task without any problems.

Altogether, 35 people participated in this study. One participant had to be excluded because of missing answers. The 19 females and 16 males consisted of 20 participants aged 18 to 25, 7 participants aged 26 to 39, 6 participants aged 40 to 59 and 2 participants older than 60. Eighteen of them were from the Netherlands, 8 from Germany, 6 from other

European countries and 3 from non-European countries. Each participant was randomly allocated to one of the two conditions: *Guilt Manipulation Group* ($n = 19$) and *Innocence Manipulation Group* ($n = 16$).

Materials and Procedure

Introduction to the study

    Information Sheet. After participants entered the room; they were given access to a computer containing the information sheet of the study (Appendix A). Qualtrics was used for the information sheet, the vignette, and the questionnaires. Through the information sheet, participants were informed that they were asked to play the role of a police interviewer while another participant would play the role of the suspect. In reality, this was a deception, and the suspect was another researcher. The deception was done to make the scenario more realistic for the participant. Furthermore, the information sheet stated that all of the information about the crime and the evidence will be provided to the participants.

    Task Instructions. The interview questions were provided to the participant, and they were asked to read them aloud and to exactly follow the instructions on this paper to avoid differences between interviews. The participants were told that this was done so that they can focus on the suspects responses instead of having to think about the questions. This was a cover story told to the participant to ensure that each participant used the same question while at the same time the consistency of the questions across interviews helped to standardize them. Additionally, the participant was told that they will have to fill out a consent form and answer a few questionnaires before and after the interview took place. The participant was then asked to prepare for the interview by reading the case description and the interview questions. Once the participant indicated that they are ready, the suspect would enter the room and leave the room immediately after the interview took place.

Consent and Withdrawal. In regard to potential risk and discomfort, the participant was told there was not any and that the research was authorized by the BMS Ethics Committee (Approval code: 230575). Furthermore, the participants were guaranteed anonymity. They were told that their data would solely be used for research and education purposes. If the participant did not feel comfortable sharing demographic data due to the worry of being recognized, they were told that they are free to leave this information out. Furthermore, the information sheet stated that participation is completely voluntarily, and that the participant has the right to withdraw at any point in time or express any complaints they might have. The participant was then given enough time to carefully read through it and ask any questions.

Vignette

After reading the information sheet, the participants were asked to read the vignette of the study (Appendix B). Through this vignette, the participants were given information about the case. Specifically, the participants were told through the vignette that they would take over the role of a police officer interrogating a suspect. The suspect was considered to be allegedly involved in a drug dealing with another woman. This woman, called Mrs Brown, already got arrested for selling different types of drugs in a park and the suspect is alleged to be her accomplice. The participant was provided with a list of five pieces of evidence which can be found in Appendix B. The evidence was purposefully weak to maximise the probability that the participants could judge the suspect as being innocent. The strength of the evidence was based on the Evidence Framing Matrix (Granhag et al., 2012). It was considered weak because it was coming from unreliable and weak sources, e.g., a woman with schizophrenia. Individuals with a mental health condition are often perceived to be less reliable and credible when it comes to evidence (Gatenby, 2020; Reavey et al., 2016).

Furthermore, the weak evidence provided to the participant lacked specificity, e.g., the phone call on the suspects phone coming from the woman who dealt the drugs on the day on which the drug deal happened.

Afterwards, the participant was told that they will be provided with an interview script with questions for the suspect and to assume that the introductory part of the interview already took place. The purpose of the interview was solely to get to know the suspect's version of events. Lastly, the participant was told to read the questions in order, to listen and think carefully about the responses from the suspect and to answer the then following questions about the experience of the interview.

The manipulation of this study was taken from research conducted by Kassin et al., (2003) in which it successfully influenced participants to believe that the participant was either innocent or guilty. This was done by dividing the participants into two groups. Participants in the *Guilt Manipulation Group* were told at the end of the vignette that "four out of five (80%) people interviewed as suspects for this crime actually **committed** the crime", while participants in the *Innocence Manipulation Group* were told that "four out of five (80%) people interviewed as suspects for this crime actually **did not commit** the crime".

Pre-Interview

There was one researcher in the room, another researcher playing the role of the suspect stayed in a different room during the beginning of the study. The researcher then instructed the participant to fill out a pre-questionnaire and gave them enough time to do so. Afterwards, the researcher made sure that there were no questions left and that the suspect still wanted to participate. The researcher then left the room and came back with the second researcher playing the suspect.

Pre-Questionnaire

The *guilt judgement* was measured twice during the course of the study. Doing this enabled the researchers to conduct a manipulation check to see whether the *guilt presumption* at the beginning of the study actually affected the *guilt judgement* of the participant or whether it changed after the interview. Firstly, it was measured directly after the participant read the case description and then again after the participant conducted the interview. This was done by asking the participant how sure they are about the suspect's guilt. The participant answered this on a six-point Likert scale (1 = very sure the suspect is innocent; 6 = very sure the suspect is guilty). There were multiple reasons for not choosing a neutral midpoint. Firstly, the researcher wanted to lead the participants to decide for either the guilt or innocence of the suspect in order to be able to compare these two variables with each other and amongst conditions. Furthermore, when using a 5-point Likert scale, people are likely to choose the midpoint (Matell & Jacoby, 1972). This can be considered as "satisfying behaviour", which means that individuals go for the minimal acceptable response instead of putting in the effort to find the most optimal response. Additionally, research shows that individuals do not always interpret the midpoint in the same way as the researcher intended them to (Chyung et al., 2017). Individuals selecting the midpoint do not always do so because they feel neutral about the topic, which could threaten the validity and reliability of the scale. This measurement represented the variable Guilt Judgement Pre.

Interview

After finishing the first part of the study on Qualtrics, the participant joined the researcher and the suspect for the interview (Appendix C). Furthermore, it was avoided that the suspect and researcher knew each other to prevent biased results. Additionally, the suspect was not aware whether the participant was in the *Guilt Manipulation Group* or *Innocent*

Manipulation Group. Otherwise, this knowledge could have influenced the suspect's behaviour. It was important that the suspect acts the same way in both conditions to avoid that other variables than *guilt presumption* and the *halo effect* influence the later *guilt judgement* and *rapport*. Furthermore, the researcher playing the suspect was counterbalanced across the conditions to prevent the individual differences in the suspect from affecting the findings. For example, if one of the researchers would constantly be rated as having more *rapport* and would play the role of the suspect more often in one of the experimental conditions that could influence the results.

Interview Questions

When starting the interview, the participant was instructed to ask the suspect the interview questions (Appendix C). The questions were formulated neutrally and open-ended rather than accusatory to avoid short answers and to decrease the likelihood of false confessions (Vrij et al., 2006; Meissner et al., 2012). The evidence was highlighted to the participant by writing them in an italic font and after each question, the participant was asked whether they could explain this (e.g., "*A 12-year-old child saw you together with Mrs Brown in a car, driving to the crime scene, shortly before Mrs Brown dealt the drugs.* Can you also explain this?"). Furthermore, the answers from the suspect were always the same across conditions. In total, there were nine questions.

Post-Questionnaires for Participants

Guilt Judgement. After finishing the interview, the suspect left the room, and the participant was provided with the second *guilt judgement* questionnaire. This questionnaire was identical to the pre-questionnaire and represented the variable Guilt Judgement Post.

Rapport. The study used the Rapport Scale for Investigative Interviews and Interrogations (Rs3I) Interviewee Version (Duke et al., 2018) to measure the dependent variable of *rapport*. This scale had 18 items that measured six dimensions of *rapport*, including expertise, cultural similarity, attentiveness, commitment behaviour, and connected flow (Appendix D). Participants rated their agreement with these items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The higher the score, the greater the presence of *rapport*. The scale was adjusted to fit the interviewer's perspective. An example item of the scale is "The interviewee was attentive to me.", while the Interviewee Version was "The interviewer was attentive to me.". The scale had good internal reliability (α= .90) in the sample used for the study.

Halo Effect. The participant received a questionnaire testing for the *halo effect* (Appendix E). The questions addressed assumptions the participant might had in regards of the suspect's personality traits. For this, the traits trustworthiness, likeability, friendliness, honesty, empathy, an interest in other people's wellbeing, and ethical behaviour were investigated. The questionnaire consisted of seven items and showed a good internal consistency among the questions and reliability of the scale (α = .80). These specific traits were chosen as they represent positive personality traits and/or behaviours which people possess but are independent from being judged guilty of a crime. For example, the interviewer might judge the suspect as being friendly and trustworthy after perceiving them as innocent while another interviewer might not think of the suspect as having these traits after perceiving the same suspect behaving the same way to be guilty. Participants rated their agreement with these items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). The higher the score, the more positive the appraisal of the suspect's character. The answers following this were used to test if these traits vary depending on guilt condition, and if these additionally correlate with *guilt judgement*.

Demographics. The participant had to conduct a questionnaire containing questions about their age, gender, profession, and nationality.

Debriefing. At the end of the study, the participant received information about the purpose of the study (Appendix F). This included telling the participant that the study aims to understand how *guilt presumption* affect how interviewers interpret explanations provided by suspects. The participants were told that all of the suspects were innocent and only the *guilt presumption* was manipulated to see if that would change the outcome of the investigative interview. This was done by manipulating the information at the beginning of the interview. Furthermore, it was revealed to the participant that the suspect was actually a researcher and not another participant like they were made to believe. It was also explained to them that this deception was necessary to make them focus on the narrative of the suspect.

After receiving this information, the participant was given a second chance to withdraw from the study and ask any questions that may have come up. None of the participants withdrew from the study. Additionally, the participants were told that they were free to tell others about the study and motivate them to participate as well but asked to leave out the details of it to maintain the integrity of the study. When there were no questions left, the researcher thanked the participant, and they left the room.

Data Analysis

In the study, the data analysis program R version 2023.03.1 was utilized, and all analyses were carried out with a significance level of 0.05. Mann-Whitney U tests were employed to confirm the effectiveness of manipulating the independent variable and to test whether interviewers presuming guilt prior to the interview will be more likely to assume innocent suspects are guilty after the interview (hypothesis one). This was done because the data was not normally distributed, and the outcome of the *guilt judgement* variable was

ordinal. Furthermore, Spearman Rank Correlation was conducted to test whether interviewers are more likely to assume that suspects are innocent when they assign positive traits to the suspect (hypothesis two). This was done to explore the relationship between the variables *halo effect* and *guilt judgement* and this type of correlation analysis was chosen because the data was not normally distributed and measured through an ordinal scale. Lastly, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to test whether the interviewer's perceived *rapport* towards the suspect will be reduced if the interviewer presumes that the suspect is guilty (hypothesis three). The reason a Mann-Whitney U tests was chosen over a t-test was that the data was not normally distributed and because the data was measured on an ordinal scale.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations between the study variables *guilt judgment* pre and post interview, *rapport*, and *halo effect*. As can be seen from the table, the variables *guilt judgement* pre and post interview are positively correlated. Furthermore, while there seems to be no correlation between *guilt judgement* pre and *rapport*, there seems to be a weak positive correlation between *guilt judgement* post and *rapport*. Additionally, the table shows a negative correlation between the *guilt judgement* pre and post scores and the *halo effect* scores. Lastly, the results show a moderate negative correlation between the variables *halo effect* and *rapport*.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-correlations Among Variables

Variables	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4
1. Guilt Judgement Pre	3.71	1.13	1			

2. Guilt Judgement Post	3.60	1.01	.68	1		
3. Halo effect	3.05	0.54	-.23	-.43	1	
4. Rapport	2.46	0.42	.00	.28	-.52	1

Note. N = 35. Guilt Judgement Pre and Guilt Judgement Post can be interpreted on a six-point Likert scale, Halo Effect and Rapport can be interpreted on a five-point Likert scale.

Effectiveness of Manipulation

The majority of the participants thought the suspect was guilty (*N* = 24, 66.7%) before the interview took place. When asking them after the interview for the second time, most participants were still thinking that the suspect was guilty (*N* = 20, 55.6%). To check whether the manipulation worked, it was compared whether there was a difference in *guilt judgement* before the interview based on the guilt manipulation. For this, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted. The Mann-Whitney U test showed that there was no significant difference between answers from participants from both the *Guilt Manipulation* (*M* = 4, *SD* = 1.04, *Mdn* = 4, *IQR* = 4, 4.5) and the *Innocence Manipulation Group* (*M* = 3.38, *SD* = 1.15, *Mdn* = 3.5, *IQR* = 3, 4), *U* = 96.5, *p* = .051. According to the test results, the manipulation seemed to have no to at best a very weak effect.

Guilt Judgement Ratings

To check whether there was a difference between the *Guilt Manipulation Group* and the *Innocence Manipulation Group* when it comes to their *guilt judgement* at the end of the interview, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted. The result showed no significant difference between the *Guilt Manipulation Group* (*M* = 3.79, *SD* = 1.18, *Mdn* = 4, *IQR* = 3, 5) and the *Innocence Manipulation Group* (*M* = 3.38, *SD* = 0.72, *Mdn* = 3, *IQR* = 3, 4), *U* = 106, *p* = .115.

Hypothesis one stated that interviewers who were primed to believe that the suspect is guilty would be more likely to assume the suspect's guilt after the interview took place. Since there was no difference between the *Guilt Manipulation Group* and the *Innocence Manipulation Group*, hypothesis one was not supported. However, since there was very nearly an effect in the *guilt judgement* before the interview and no effect in the *guilt judgement* after the interview, this might indicate that the interview may well have reduced the size of any initial difference between the two groups.

Halo Effect Ratings

To examine whether the *halo effect* has an impact on the *guilt judgement* of the participants a Spearman Rank Correlation was conducted. The analysis showed a moderate negative correlation between the answers to the *halo effect* questions ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 0.54$) and the answer regarding the post *guilt judgement* ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.01$), $r(33) = -.43$, $p = .009$. Furthermore, the results showed a weak negative correlation between the *halo effect* scores and the pre *guilt judgement* ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.13$) scores, $r(33) = -.23$, $p = .189$. Considering the scoring system of the questions (higher scores for *guilt judgement* equal less guilty and higher scores for *halo effect* equal stronger *halo effect*), this means that a higher score on the *halo effect* questions would be associated with a smaller chance of assuming the suspect is guilty.

Hypothesis two stated that when interviewers assign positive traits to the suspect, they will be more likely to assume that guilty suspects are innocent. The results of the Spearman Rank Correlation showed a negative correlation between these variables which means that higher scores on the *halo effect* questions are associated with a smaller chance of thinking the suspect is guilty. Hence, the prediction can be confirmed.

Additionally, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to test whether there was a difference between the conditions when it comes to the *halo effect*. The result showed no significant difference between the *Guilt Manipulation Group* (*Mdn* = 2.93, *IQR* = 2.79, 3.43) and the *Innocence Manipulation Group* (*Mdn* = 2.86, *IQR* = 2.71, 3.36), *U* = 149, *p* = .933.

Rapport Ratings

To test whether there was an effect of *guilt presumption* on the perceived *rapport* of the interviewer, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted. For this, the means were calculated from both the *Guilt Manipulation Group* (*M* = 2.52, *SD* = 0.42) and the *Innocence Manipulation Group* (*M* = 2.48, *SD* = 0.45) and then compared. It was decided to work with a Mann-Whitney U test instead of a t-test since the *rapport* data was not normally distributed and the *guilt judgement* outcome was ordinal. The results showed no significant difference between the *Guilt Manipulation Group* (*Mdn* = 2.41, *IQR* = 2.35, 2.75) and the *Innocence Manipulation Group* (*Mdn* = 2.47, *IQR* = 2.09, 2.74), *U* = 159.5, *p* = .816.

Hypothesis three stated that when interviewers presume guilt, the perceived *rapport* will be reduced in the interviewer after the interview. Since the *rapport* ratings did not show a significant difference between the two conditions and guilt assumptions, hypothesis three was not supported.

This is further supported by the results in Table 1 which show that there seems to be a very weak correlation between *guilt judgement* pre and *rapport*, $r(33) = .00$, $p = .999$. While there does seem to be a weak positive correlation between *guilt judgement* post and *rapport*, $r(33) = .28$, $p = .304$, this result is does not seem to be statistically significant. Hence, it cannot be said with certainty whether *guilt judgement* and *rapport* are correlated or not.

It is worth noting that there seems to be a moderate negative correlation between *rapport* and *halo effect*, $r(33) = -.52$, $p = .001$ (see Table 1). This means that higher scores on the *halo effect* scale are correlated with lower scores on the *rapport* scale.

Discussion

Reflection of the Findings

The aim of this study was to explore the effects of guilt presumption within investigative interviews. To be more concise, it was investigated whether guilt presumption has an effect on guilt judgement, the halo effect, and rapport between the interviewer and the suspect.

Guilt Manipulation

The findings showed that two third of the participants thought the suspect was guilty before the interview. Since there was no significant difference between the two conditions, the guilt manipulation did not seem to have worked. However, it is worth noting that the results were just slightly above the value for them to become not significant and the sample size was small. Hence, it could be possible that the manipulation had a very weak effect that was just not visible due to its sample size. When replicating this study with a larger sample size, the manipulation might have a visible effect.

Guilt Judgements (Hypothesis One)

Hypothesis one stated that interviewers who presume guilt prior to the interview will be more likely to assume innocent suspects are guilty after the interview. While the results showed that there was no difference between the Innocent Manipulation Group and the Guilt Manipulation Group, it difficult to say whether this shows an effect of confirmation bias since the manipulation check showed no significant difference between the groups in the first place.

This study was investigating whether initial guilt judgements can be changed based on high quality interviews with innocent suspects. After the interview took place, 4 participants (11.7%) changed their mind to assuming the suspect was innocent. However, while some people changed their mind from guilty to innocent after the interview took place, still a lot of people thought the suspect was guilty even when primed with innocence and despite the fact that the provided evidence was purposefully weak. This is in line with previous research, for example from Adams-Quackenbush et al. (2019), stating that identifying a suspect for an investigation can lead to a guilt assumption of the interviewer in regard to the individual being interviewed. An explanation for this could be the so called 'investigator bias' which is a tendency to perceive suspects in investigative interviews as guilty (Meissner & Kassin, 2004). Hence, even when participants were primed to believe that the suspects might be innocent the sole fact that they were a suspect in the investigation might have led them to believe that the suspect is in fact guilty anyway. This might have led the participants to the phenomena called confirmation bias which relates to the active seeking for information that will confirm one's belief but also the ignorance of confirmation that might disconfirm one's belief (Nickerson, 1998).

In the context of this research, this could mean that the participants, who might have been primed to believe that the suspect is guilty, solely because they were a suspect in an investigative interview, might have ignored the explanations provided by the suspect discrediting the evidence and instead focused on the evidence confirming their guilt assumption. In addition to ignoring the provided explanations from the suspect, in the Innocence Manipulation Group the confirmation bias could have taken the form of disregarding the manipulation telling the participants that the suspect is likely to be innocent and only focusing on the evidence suggesting that the suspect might be guilty. When practicing confirmation bias the strength of the evidence might not have been important to the

participants as they could have just focused on the fact that there is any evidence at all which can confirm their assumptions instead of no evidence and hence no reasoning for their pre-existing beliefs.

This type of confirmation bias is in line with a study conducted by Baldwin (1992) in which he evaluated 400 video recordings and 200 audio recordings of real police interviews. One of his findings was that some interviewers did not seem to listen to the explanation provided by the suspect or completely dismissed them. Just like the interviewers in Baldwin's research, the participants in this study might have not paid too much attention to the actual interview and the provided evidence or simply did not believe the explanation provided by the suspect. This is further supported by the results showing a moderately strong positive correlation between the two guilt judgement measurements. This means that participants who judged the suspect as being guilty during the first measurement were also more likely to stick with their judgement for the second measurement of guilt.

A possible way for future research to avoid this confirmation bias could be by trying to increase the intrinsic motivation of the participant. This relates to the motivation to conduct in a behaviour coming from the sole satisfaction of the activity itself rather than external rewards like, e.g., money. Research conducted by Donovan (2015) showed that the cognitive performance of participant became more accurate when their intrinsic motivation was increased. Future research could explore whether this also applies to the guilt judgement in investigative interviews, possibly due to individuals being more motivated to focus on what is said during these interviews to get the most accurate results.

Halo Effect (Hypothesis Two)

Furthermore, hypothesis two stated that interviewers are more likely to assume that suspects are innocent when they assign positive traits to the suspect. This prediction could be

accepted since the Spearman Rank Correlation showed that a higher score on the halo effect questions correlated with lower scores on the guilt assumption question. This extends on previous research in regard to the halo effect. Pohl (2016) stated that individuals form their judgements about people based on known traits about that person, even if these traits are completely unrelated to the trait in question. In the case of the current study, the participants were asked to make judgements about the suspect at the end of the study. The fact that participants rated the suspect more favourably when they previously judged the suspect to be innocent could be a form of the cognitive bias called halo effect.

It is worth noting that while the correlations between the two different guilt judgements and the halo effect were both rather weak, the correlation between the later guilt judgement and the halo effect were slightly stronger. This could be a possible indication for the interview influencing the participant's judgement about the suspect at the end. For example, a study by Harmon-Jones & Allen (2001) showed that individuals fear the unknown and once they become more familiar with something, they feel an increase in positive feelings towards them. In the context of the current study this could mean that the participant became more comfortable with the suspect during the interview since they did not appear to be a total stranger anymore. Hence, this could be why the halo effect scores are more strongly correlated with the later guilt judgement. If that would be the case, the measured effect would not necessarily be a halo effect but rather come from the exposure between the participant and the suspect. Future research could look into this. Since the correlation only slightly increased between the guilt judgements, a larger sample size could potentially make the results more significant and hence shed light on whether the results are actually related to the halo effect or something different like exposure.

Rapport (Hypothesis Three)

The Mann-Whitney U test showed no proof that the perceived rapport decreases when interviewer assume the suspect is guilty which is why hypothesis three, stating that when interviewers presume guilt the perceived rapport will be reduced in the interviewer after the interview, was not supported.-This is further supported by the correlation analysis which showed that there is barely to no correlation between rapport and the first guilt judgement measurement and only a weak but not significant correlation between rapport and the second guilt judgement measurement. A possible explanation for this could be that the interviews were specifically designed to be high quality, and so build rapport, and the suspect was always cooperative and behaved the same across conditions. These factors could lead to a heightened rapport (Richardson & Nash, 2021). However, even though these factors applied, the rapport still was not that high which could be due to the fact that there was no introduction for the interview which could have heightened the rapport further (Weiher, 2020).

Strengths, Limitations, Suggestions for Future Research

The study faced a few limitations which could have influenced the results. One of the limitations was the small number of participants due to time constraints. Only 35 participants ended up taking part in the study. Due to the small sample size, it is unlikely that the results of this study can be applied to the broader population (Button et al., 2013). Another study with a larger sample size should be conducted to see whether the results stay the same and can be generalized.

Furthermore, a second limitation of the study might have been that English was not the first language of either the researchers or the participants. While it was made sure that everyone participating had sufficient English skills, meaning they were able to understand everything without any problems, this could have still influenced the results. Caldwell-Harris (2014) found out that individuals are less emotional when not communicating in their first

language which could have had an effect on the guilt judgement and rapport scores as emotions are crucial when it comes to this. This could have reduced the reliability and validity of the scores. Future research could focus on conducting the study in the first language of both the researchers and the participants.

Another limitation worth noting is that the study took place on campus in the laboratory instead of, for example, an actual police station. One of these limitations that comes with this is that individuals can feel more stressed and a heightened physiological arousal when in the environment of a laboratory (Khoshnoud et al., 2020). This can influence the results in a way that people do not behave the way they would in a real world and hence make it harder for the result to be generalized.

Another limitation of studies conducted in a laboratory is that the environment differs from the natural environment (Kihlstrom, 2021). This threatens the generalisation of the results as variables different from or even not existing in the real-world might influence the behaviour of the individuals. For example, in real-world investigative interviews, the interviewer would be able to come up with their own questions as well as the suspect with their own answers. This factor could have a significant difference on the outcome of the investigative interviews as it is shown that guilt presumption can lead to guilt-presumptive questioning and other coercive tactics from the interviewer which in turn can lead to false confessions from the suspect and an eventual miscarriage of justice (Kassin, 2005; Lassiter, 2004).

However, conducting studies in a laboratory also comes with strengths. One of these strengths is that researchers are able to reproduce complex real-world situations in a controlled environment to be able to determine cause-and-effect relations (Kihlstrom, 2021). In the case of this study, the researchers were able to control the questions asked in the

interview to be able to stop them from interfering with guilt assumption. Furthermore, the researchers were able to control the behaviour and answers of the suspect both of which could have also had an influence on the results. This way the researchers were able to focus on the variables like guilt presumption, halo effect and rapport something that would have been difficult in a real-world situation. Lastly, the environment also allowed the researchers to isolate the effect of guilt presumptions from the differences in the questions. This enabled the study to provide insights into whether guilt presumption has an effect on the processing of otherwise completely identical information.

An additional strength of providing a set of fixed questions for each interview was that this way the participants could fully concentrate on the answers coming from the study. Most studies exploring investigative interviews allow the participant to come up with their own question or to select from a pool of fixed questions (Hill et al., 2008; Kassin et al., 2003). However, it could be argued that this could overwhelm an individual who does not have experience in this field and take away cognitive load that could have otherwise been used for focusing on the explanations provided by the suspect.

Lastly, another strength of the study was the introduction of a scale meant to measure the halo effect. There is a lack of research in regard to the halo effect in the context of guilt presumption in investigative interviews. The measurements used in this study could be used to further improve the scale and its reliability as well as validity. Furthermore, this research can be used as groundwork for future research to explore whether the results found in this study can be generalized and whether the halo effect is actually correlated to guilt judgement.

Conclusion

This study investigated whether guilt presumption has an effect on guilt judgement, the halo effect and rapport between the interviewer and the suspect. The study is important

from an academic perspective as many individuals end up getting wrongfully convicted for a crime they did not commit, and research should investigate why this happens. The fact that the guilt manipulation had barely to no effect on the study made it difficult to come to a significant conclusion, but the study still provided some insightful data in regard to guilt judgement, rapport, and the halo effect. One of these insights is that individuals tend to believe that a suspect in an investigative interview is guilty even when confronted with weak evidence or primed with innocence. Furthermore, it seems like there is a correlation between individual's guilt judgement and the way they think about the suspect. Overall, this study can be used to build upon for future research to improve investigative interviews. This future research may, e.g., include further investigating why individuals might be biased to perceive a suspect in an investigative interview to be guilty and how to counteract this. Furthermore, the relationship between guilt judgement and the halo effect could be explored more in depth. Both of these research suggestions could help to ensure that investigative interviews stay objective and free from influences of variables not relevant for the actual interview and guilt judgement.

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Appendix A

Instructions before Interview

Instructions before Interview

Thank you for your interest in taking part in our study. Please read the following information

carefully.

Our Research

This research is about investigative interviewing. The research involves two persons and takes

the form of an interrogation. We will ask you to play the role of a police interviewer. You will

interview another participant who will play the role of the suspect.

We will give you information about the case, including the crime the suspect is accused of

and the evidence against the suspect. We will also provide you with the exact list of questions

you ask the suspect. This means that you only have to read the questions out loud (you do not

need to learn them by heart) rather than think of your own questions. This is so that you can

pay attention to the suspect's responses. This helps you when deciding if they are guilty of the

crime or not. The parts in the interview script that are in italics help you to see where the

evidence is introduced. After the interview, we ask you to fill out a questionnaire about your

experience and your perceptions of the suspect and their responses. We ask you to prepare for

the interview by reading (1) the case description and (2) the questions you will ask the

suspect. You can then ask us any questions you may have about your task.

The Meeting

We will now give you time to read the case description and the questions one more time.

Moreover, you will be asked to fill out some questions and a consent form before the suspect

enters the room. If you state you are ready the suspect will enter the meeting and you can

directly start to read out from the list of questions (you do not need to learn them by heart).

Once you finish the interview, the suspect will leave the room. You will be asked to fill out

some more questions about your experience. The researcher will stay in the room in case you have any questions. The approximate time for the meeting is half an hour.

Potential Risks and Discomforts

Taking part in this study does not expose you to risk, apart from possible slight stress due to needing to role-play. This study was approved by the BMS Ethics Committee of the University of Twente.

Right to Withdraw and Questions

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. You can withdraw at any point during the study by stating it to the researcher and your data will not be used. If you decide to stop participating in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints related to the research, you are welcome to say so to the researcher, but you do not have to explain if you do not want to.

Confidentiality

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. The gathered data will be anonymized and will only be used for research and education. Any documentation created or collected as part of this study will be stored in a secure location with the University of Twente for at least ten years in line with the data policy of our faculty. Anonymized data may be shared with the research community in accordance with the principles of open science (e.g. on osf.io). However, it is very unlikely that anyone could identify you from this data because we collect only basic demographic data. If you are worried about maintaining your anonymity, you can choose not to provide demographic data you think may identify you. For further information about the study and everything connected to it, you can contact the

researchers themselves or the BMS ethics committee of the University of Twente.

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Project Supervisor: Dr. Steven Watson; s.j.watson@utwente.nl

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Secretary of the Ethics Committee/domain Humanities & Social Sciences of the Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente by *ethicscommittee-hss@utwente.nl*

Appendix B

Vignette

Case Description

Background information about the case and list of allegations

Imagine yourself being a police officer at the police station in your city. Your supervisor asks you to interview the suspect involved in a new case. In the following text, your supervisor gives you some more information about the crime the suspect is accused of. This includes the evidence gathered against the suspect.

Alleged offence

On 30/03/2023 the police arrested a woman named Mrs Brown for dealing drugs. The woman was caught selling different types of drugs in the park in your town. The woman dealt with Opiates (Heroin, morphine), Hallucinogens (LSD), and Marijuana. She was arrested at 4.30 pm by two police officers who were on street patrol in the park. The suspect is alleged to be her accomplice and therefore is also suspected of dealing drugs. The evidence gathered against the suspect that may indicate they were implicated in the drug dealing offence of 30/03/2023 is listed here:

- An old woman with schizophrenia saw someone that looked like the suspect together with Mrs Brown in the park, 5 minutes before and after Mrs Brown dealt the drugs.

- A 12-year-old child saw the suspect that might have been the suspect driving together with Mrs Brown to the crime scene, shortly before Mrs Brown dealt the drugs.

- There was one phone call from Mrs Brown on the suspect´s phone on the day of the crime, though the content of this call is unknown.

- Mrs Brown says that she knows the suspect but refused to disclose the nature of their relationship or whether the suspect is directly involved in her drug dealing.

- There were traces of marijuana found in the car of the suspect.

(When Guilt Manipulation Group)

Your supervisor reminds you that four out of five (80%) people interviewed as suspects for this crime actually **committed** the crime.

(When Innocence Manipulation Group)

Your supervisor reminds you that four out of five (80%) people interviewed as suspects for this crime actually **did not commit** the crime.

Your task is to question the suspect, who will be played by another participant. To help you, a script has been provided which gives you the questions you should put to the suspect. You can assume that the introduction part of the interview, where you introduce yourself to the suspect and explain the legal rights to the suspect, is already done. It has also been explained that the suspect is being questioned because of the suspect's links to a woman who was arrested for dealing drugs. Now you are only collecting the suspects version of events. This means you can directly ask the questions we have provided without having to introduce yourself. Please read these questions in order, think carefully about the suspect's responses, and afterwards, we will ask you questions about your experience in the interview.

(When Guilt Manipulation Group)

Indicate to the researcher that you are ready to conduct the interview and later in the

questionnaire enter the letter **A** at the question: "Did you receive the letter A or B at the start

of this experiment?".

(When Innocence Manipulation Group)

Indicate to the researcher that you are ready to conduct the interview and later in the

questionnaire enter the letter **B** at the question: "Did you receive the letter A or B at the start

of this experiment?".

Appendix C

Interview Script

Interviewer: Can you please tell me your version of events?

Interviewee: I don't really have a lot to say. I don't even know this woman and now I am suspected of being involved in a crime with her. I don't really know what to say.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what you did on the afternoon of the 14/02/2023?

Interviewee: It was a Monday. On Monday afternoons I am usually working. I am a taxi driver in my town, and my work shift is always from 2pm until 8pm. I remember that this day was a really busy day, and I had a lot of clients.

Interviewer: Do you remember any of the clients you had that day?

Interviewee: I am sorry. I don't remember the clients I had that day, because there were so many. But I can ask my boss if he still has the list of clients I drove on that day.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything else?

Interviewee: No, sorry. Maybe you could explain why you are questioning me, because at this point I really don't know why I am being suspected of the crime.

Interviewer: *An old woman saw that you were together with Mrs Brown in the park, 5 minutes before and after she dealt drugs.* So can you explain why you were with Mrs Brown if you do not know her?

Interviewee: Mhh... so ... sometimes during my break, which is usually at around 4pm, I go in the park and walk around a bit. You can ask my colleagues, I have done that since I started working at the taxi company, even when it is a busy day. I am sorry, I forgot to mention that earlier. Sometimes, I feel like talking with other people in the park, so I just ask them how their day was. Most of them are quite friendly, so I have a short chat with them, while walking around in the park. Maybe this Mrs Brown could have been one of the people I talked to.

Interviewer: *A 12 year old child saw you together with Mrs Brown in a car, driving to the crime scene, shortly before Mrs Brown dealt the drugs.* Can you also explain this?

Interviewee: Probably this woman was a client of mine. Probably she wanted me to drive her to the park, and then I decided to use my break talking to her in the park. I mean, to be honest, I don't remember all the people I drive, even if I have good conversations with them. There are just too many to remember them all. I am sorry.

Interviewer: *We know that there was one phone call from Mrs Brown on your phone.* Do you know why this is?

Interviewee: My boss does not arrange my clients for me, but I schedule my own clients. I have the same phone number for my work and my private stuff. A lot of people contact me outside of my work shift. Most of them are desperately trying to get a taxi, as there are not a lot of taxi drivers around our town. So, when I start my shift in the afternoon, I already have a lot of phone calls and messages from clients wanting me to drive me at a certain time and to a certain location.

Interviewer: Earlier you said that you don't know Mrs Brown. *However, she said she knows you, but refused to disclose the nature of your relationship or whether you are directly involved in her drug dealing.* Can you explain this?

Interviewee: As I already mentioned, I like to chat with people. I am a social person, and a lot of people know me. I mean, as a taxi driver, you get around quite a lot in town and the people just know you. Many people get to know you, but the problem is that I am really bad at remembering their names and faces. I mean, I might have talked with this woman at some point. However, I am certain that I am not involved in any drug business with her, that is how much I can tell you.

Interviewer: *Why do you think that there were traces of Marijuana found in your car?*

Interviewee: I am telling you; you could basically find traces of drugs in every taxi driving around the city. I mean it is not like all my clients are saints. They certainly like to have fun. Just because there were traces of drugs in my car, it doesn't mean that they belong to me. I would never risk my job by transporting drugs in my taxi. But you said that I drove this woman, this Mrs Brown to the park. I mean if she dealt drugs in the park, she already had drugs on her and this is the reason why you found traces of drugs in my taxi. There is no reason to assume the drugs were from me.

Interviewer: Okay, that is the end of the interview.

Appendix D

Questions Rapport

Please answer the following questions on the 5-point Likert scale with the response options of:

1=strongly agree

2=agree

3=neither agree nor disagree

4=disagree

5=strongly disagree

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

2. The interviewer paid attention to my opinion

3. The interviewer was attentive to me

4. The interviewer was interested in my point of view

5. The interviewer was honest with me

6. The interviewer respects my knowledge

7. The interviewer can generally be trusted to keep the word

8. I can trust the interviewer to keep word to me

9. The interviewer did the job with skill

10. The interviewer performed expertly

11. The interviewer made effort to do a good job

12. The interviewer acted like a professional

13. We have our culture in common

14. The interviewer and I share one ethnicity

15. The Interviewer shares my culture

16. We worked well as a team

17. The communication went smoothly

18. The Interviewer and I got along well

Appendix E

Questions Halo Effect

Please answer the following questions on the 5-point Likert scale with the response options of:

1=strongly agree

2=agree

3=neither agree nor disagree

4=disagree

5=strongly disagree

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

2. The interviewer paid attention to my opinion

3. The interviewer was attentive to me

4. The interviewer was interested in my point of view

5. The interviewer was honest with me

6. The interviewer respects my knowledge

7. The interviewer can generally be trusted to keep the word

8. I can trust the interviewer to keep word to me

9. The interviewer did the job with skill

10. The interviewer performed expertly

11. The interviewer made effort to do a good job

12. The interviewer acted like a professional

13. We have our culture in common

14. The interviewer and I share one ethnicity

15. The Interviewer shares my culture

16. We worked well as a team

17. The communication went smoothly

18. The Interviewer and I got along well

Appendix F

Debriefing

Debriefing

Thank you for your participation! After this study, you might ask yourself what will happen with the data. Our study will help us to understand how presumptions of guilt affect how interviewers interpret explanations provided by suspects. In our study, all the suspects that are interviewed are innocent and provide identical accounts to the interviewer. However, we manipulated prior guilt assumptions to determine whether these made the accounts provided by suspects less likely to be believed and whether this might affect investigative decision making such as whether to continue investigating the suspect. We did this by changing the information you received prior to the interview taking place.

We also told you that the suspect was another participant. In truth, they were part of the research team. We apologise for this deception, but it was necessary in order to have participants focus on the narrative provided by the suspect. In case you would like to know more about the study, the theoretical background, or the study findings, feel free to contact any of the researchers. If you have questions or concerns about the study, please do not hesitate to reach out to the researchers.

If you have enjoyed taking part please feel free to share our contact details with your friends, however, to maintain the integrity of the study, please do not share with anyone the information in this form about the specific ideas we are testing or how we test them.

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