The Effect of Communication Errors and Suspect Motive on Interviewers in an Organisational Insider Investigation - The Influence of Conscientiousness on Guilt and Behaviour

Bachelor's Thesis

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Content

Abstract

While insider threats pose a great danger to organisations, it has not yet been investigated how to adequately handle this issue in workplace investigative interviews and what role communication errors can play in this setting. Therefore, this study assessed the impact of factual communication errors and the perceived insider motive of a suspect on an investigative interviewer's behavioural responses and feelings of guilt. Additionally, the interviewer's personality was considered by investigating how conscientiousness may act as a predictor and moderator between presumed suspect motive, making a factual error and the interviewer's behavioural and emotional responses.

Participants (N = 112) played the role of an interviewer conducting an investigative interview where they questioned an insider suspect. The study employed a 2 (error: 'factual error' vs. 'no error') x 2 (motive: 'deliberate' vs. 'accidental') between-subjects design.

The results of this study indicated no effect of the factual error as well as the presumed suspect motive on an interviewer's experience of guilt. Furthermore, no significant interaction between conscientiousness, the factual error and presumed insider suspect motive was found. Moreover, no effect of conscientiousness on the response strategies or experience of guilt after making a factual error was detected, while an additional analysis revealed that experienced guilt did lead to less use of the contradict response strategy. Thus, there might not be an effect of presumed suspect motive, error, or conscientiousness on interviewers' emotional and behavioural responses. Nonetheless, future research in this area is still needed as it may give insight into the emotional and behavioural responses of work investigative interviewers and provide them with the best tools for adequate communication when dealing with insider suspects.

Keywords: Investigative interviewing, insider threat, factual communication error, presumed suspect motive, conscientiousness, response strategies, guilt.

The Effect of Communication Errors and Suspect Motive on Interviewers in an Organisational Insider Investigation - The Influence of Conscientiousness on Guilt and Behaviour

In recent years, the danger insider threats pose to organisations and companies have become more evident with insiders like Edward Snowden or Julian Assange gaining international media attention by stealing insider data (Luther & Radovic, 2014; Nurse et al., 2014; Verble, 2014). Contrary to what might be expected, about 48% of security breaches are caused by insider activities (Baker et al., 2010). However, organisations are averse to publishing data of insider attacks in their company to protect their reputation. Consequently, the number of these attacks might be even higher (Hunker & Probst, 2011). While there are various definitions of what an insider is, Bishop et al. (2008), state that the core characteristics of an insider can be described as follows: "An insider is a person that has been legitimately empowered with the right to access, represent, or decide about one or more assets of the organisation's structure" (Bishop et al., 2008, p. 5). Further, a person who is an insider threat can be described as: "an individual with privileges who misuses them or whose access results in misuse" (Hunker & Probst, 2011, p. 7). This definition points to an important detail about insiders, namely, an insider might intentionally misuse the system, or they might use the system and unintentionally cause misuse. Due to the hesitation of organisations to publish information about insider attacks, research about specific types of insiders and their characteristics and motivations is rare and difficult to conduct. Therefore, investigating how insiders can be properly handled, would be a helpful contribution to counteracting this threat (Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure, 2013; Hunker & Probst, 2011).

When there is suspicion of an insider threat, the affected organisation will most likely conduct investigative interviews with their employees. The goal of an investigative interviewer, in this context, is to gather information from the suspect and to find out what happened (Van Vlaenderen & Kleiner, 2000; Woska, 2013). However, these interviews do not always go according to plan due to instances such as communication errors. While there is no global definition of communication errors, they can be described as misunderstandings that derive from either faulty delivered information, grammatical inaccuracy, or false information/information given at an incorrect moment in time (Gibson et al., 2006). Making such an error as an interviewer

can have negative consequences on the suspect such as diminishing trust and rapport while the interviewer may experience more stress and negative affect. Further, interviewers may have different behavioural reactions to their mistakes which can have diverse effects on the interviewer and suspect relationship (Oostinga et al., 2018a, 2018b, 2020).

While the studies by Oostinga et al. (2018a, 2018b, 2020), concerning communication errors were set in crisis negotiation and police interview settings, it can be argued that there are similarities to workplace investigative interviews. In both, the interviewer tries to gather information and to establish a good relationship with the other party while the suspect may face high consequences, depending on the judgement of the interviewer (Lattal, 2016; Meinert, 2017; Oostinga et al., 2018a, 2018b, 2020; Woska, 2013). Despite these similarities, communication error studies have not yet been widened to other contexts such as work investigative interviews. However, researching the impact of communication errors on the interviewer and how they evaluate their mistake in the setting of an insider investigation may lead to more awareness of the interviewer's emotional strains and give insight into the impact on behaviour and coping. This becomes especially important when considering the possible financial and reputational consequences for the company and suspect (Lattal, 2016).

Moreover, it has been shown that personality strongly influences how individuals cope with stressful situations. However, research about the influence of this factor on interviewers in an investigative interview setting is still scarce and mostly set in a police context (Akca & Eastwood, 2021; Carver, & Connor-Smith, 2009). As one of the first, this study aims to combine the fields of personality and investigative interview research in work settings. The personality trait of conscientiousness is especially interesting as conscientious individuals respect standards, are high-achievers and have high self-control which might influence their emotional and behavioural responses as interviewers when they do make a mistake (Fayard et al., 2012; Roberts et al., 2009, as cited in Fayard et al., 2012; Roberts et al., 2005). Therefore, this study will include the personality trait of conscientiousness to better understand its impact on the emotional and behavioural responses of investigative interviewers.

Additionally, this research will focus on the influence of conscientiousness and presumed motives about the suspect's insider activity on the emotional and behavioural responses of the interviewer. This focal point is added, as the evaluators' characteristics and views about others

presumed intentions play a significant role in the judgements made about someone else's actions and character (Cushman et al., 2013; Gino et al., 2010; Pascal, 2019). As conscientious individuals uphold rules and standards of behaviour, investigating their reaction to different insider motives that contrast these values will contribute to understanding the influence of personality on the evaluation of intentions (Fayard et al., 2012; Roberts et al., 2009, as cited in Fayard et al., 2012; Roberts et al., 2005). Moreover, researching the influence of the interviewer's pre-formed idea of a suspect's motive may therefore highlight the danger of biased or unequal treatment which can occur when no attention is given to the interpersonal relationship between an interviewer and suspect outside of a classic police investigation (Lattal, 2016).

In the subsequent paragraphs, investigative interviews in the context of workplace investigations and communication errors will be further described and it will be investigated how these may affect an interviewer's experience of guilt. Furthermore, the factor of conscientiousness will be explained and presumed insider motive examined and related to the experience of guilt after making a factual error. Lastly, the influence of conscientiousness on the interviewers' behavioural reactions after their error will be explored.

Workplace Investigations and Investigative Interviews

When company guidelines are violated, the employer will possibly initiate a workplace investigation. Reasons to begin an investigation may be theft, breaches in the security system or complaints about harassment and abuse at the workplace (Woska, 2013). Part of these investigations can be an investigative interview with the employee who is suspected to have engaged in a violation. These interviews may be conducted by a human resource professional but, depending on the specific case, can also be carried out by an external independent investigator or attorney (Van Vlaenderen & Kleiner, 2000; Woska, 2013). During these interviews, the investigator tries to gather the needed missing information about the reported or suspected malpractice. Based on this information and the outcome of the investigation, a decision about further (legal) consequences for the suspect may follow (Van Vlaenderen & Kleiner, 2000; Woska, 2013). However, it is not only the suspect that can face consequences, the same can be the case for the company. When mistakes are made, or the suspect is treated unfairly, the company might be confronted with lawsuits and damage to its reputation. Consequently, the interest that these

interviews go as planned is high (Woska, 2013; Lattal, 2016). Despite these stakes, mistakes such as communication errors may still occur.

Communication Errors

According to Oostinga (2018a), three different kinds of communication errors in interviews can be identified. First, the interviewer can make a factual error. A factual error describes the use of a wrong fact. For instance, the interviewer calls the suspect by the wrong name. Second, a judgement error can be made. In this type of error, the interviewer misinterprets something about the suspect, and therefore makes a subjective error. An example of this error would be to bring up a very sensitive topic while the suspect is already extremely emotional. Third, a contextual error is about mentioning something that should not be brought up in that specific context. An example of this error would be when the interviewer uses technical vocabulary that the suspect is unable to understand (Oostinga et al., 2018a).

While the judgement error seems to have a more negative effect on the suspect, this study will focus on the factual error. This type of error was chosen as it has a stronger impact on the interviewer such as stronger negative emotions than the judgement error (Oostinga et al., 2020). Specifically, the interviewer's experience of guilt will be investigated.

Factual Errors and Guilt

This study focuses on the investigator's experiences of guilt after making a factual communication error. To begin with, guilt is a self-conscious emotion that stems from negatively evaluating an action. Thereby, the actor sees the behaviour itself as morally wrong (Tracy & Robins, 2004). The connection between guilt and morality is interesting in the context of an investigative interview setting for two reasons. First, measuring guilt may indicate how interviewers interpret their errors in a professional setting and how they are affected emotionally. Second, as will be further explained below, understanding how an investigative interviewer's guilt may be influenced by the perception and evaluation of the suspect they are interacting with may give insight into the different standards professionals may set for themselves in such situations.

The feeling of guilt is therefore bound to a specific event such as making an error (Tracy & Robins, 2004). Connected to this, Oostinga et al. (2020), who investigated communication errors in crisis communication as well as police interviewing found that committing a factual communication error, resulted in more feelings of guilt in the interviewer. As an explanation for

this effect, it was indicated that making a mistake in this high-pressure situation may not meet the interviewer's desired behavioural standards, and they feel like losing some of their professionalism. More specifically to the context of this study, the connection between errors and guilt has also been observed in various work settings. For instance, in the medical field, professionals reported experiencing negative emotions such as guilt after making a medical error (Schwappach & Boluarte, 2008; Sirriyeh et al., 2010). Moreover, studies about guilt in the workplace indicated that making an error in an organisational context, especially when the mistake is noticed by another party (e.g., a colleague), can lead to increased negative affect, which includes emotions such as guilt, fear, or anger (Rausch & Seifried, 2017; Rybowiak et al., 1999). Based on these previous findings, it can be expected that the interviewer's guilt increases when a communication error in a workplace investigative interview context is made, so we hypothesise:

H1: *The interviewer experiences more feelings of guilt after making a factual error than no error.*

Factual Errors, Guilt, and Conscientiousness

The way people experience and react to their environment can be further influenced by their personality. A personality trait can be described as a style of response in terms of thinking, acting, and feeling (Fayard et al., 2012; Roberts & Jackson, 2008). The personality trait that will be investigated in this study is conscientiousness, which is one of the Big Five personality traits (Muris et al., 2018). Conscientious people tend to be responsible and rule-abiding while also planning ahead. Moreover, they tend to be good at organisation, self-control, are goal-oriented, and hard-working. Also, they can resist immediate gratification and impulses, and prefer to adhere to existing norms while additionally trying to fulfil other peoples' expectations (Fayard et al., 2012; Roberts et al., 2009, as cited in Fayard et al., 2012; John & Srivastava, 1999; Roberts et al., 2005).

While there is no research about conscientiousness and its influence on guilt after a factual error in a work interviewing context, some factors of previous research can be taken into consideration as the concepts of guilt and conscientiousness have been connected in the past (Fayard et al., 2012; Muris et al., 2018). Due to their cautious and responsible way of living, conscientious people seem to experience less guilt overall as they avoid, or prepare thoroughly, for situations that could result in unwanted outcomes. However, they are more prone to experience guilt if they do something wrong or questionable. This may be explained by the tendency to be

aware of possible consequences of their actions and an inclination to feel responsibility. Further, they are very aware of behavioural and social norms which could contribute to their experience of guilt after violating these standards (Abraham & Pane, 2014; Fayard et al., 2012; Roberts et al., 2005). Therefore, it is expected that:

H2: *People that are more conscientious are more likely to report higher experiences of guilt after making a factual error than people that score lower in conscientiousness.*

Insider Motive

As mentioned before, not all insiders act the same or have the same motives. Due to this, it is important to differentiate between them. This study will concentrate on two types of insiders. The first type of insider is the deliberate or malicious insider who purposefully attacks the organisation. Reasons for a deliberate insider attack can vary, but some factors might be financial profit, political motivations, taking revenge on the organisation, gaining an advantage over colleagues or wanting recognition (Bishop et al., 2008; Nurse et al., 2014). The second type is the non-malicious or accidental insider. An accidental insider attack is connected to making mistakes that could be associated with a faulty or overly complicated system or careless use, boredom, etc. Other contributing factors can be missing or inadequate supervision or training (Bishop et al., 2008; Nurse et al., 2014). An example of this insider activity would be to accidentally send confidential information to the wrong recipient (Nurse et al., 2014). While the intentions of these two types of insiders might be completely different, the consequences their actions can have for the affected companies can be equally damaging (Bishop et al., 2008).

But how are the different motives perceived by the interviewer? People tend to focus more on the intentions than purely the consequences when evaluating an action. This means that we give more weight to the fact that a person intentionally or accidentally causes a negative consequence and interpret the accidental act as less morally wrong. Nonetheless, this does not mean that the severity of the consequence is not also considered, independently of the actor's intention (Cushman et al., 2013; Gino et al., 2010). When we consider the feeling of guilt, it can be stated that it is connected to a sense of morality, responsibility, and adherence to personal and social norms (Tracy & Robins, 2004). When these values are violated, we may experience guilt for our action, however, the intensity of emotion may differ when the person affected by our error also acted against the norms, we consider worth adhering to. Based on this, it can be argued that the interviewer may

experience less guilt after making a mistake in front of someone who deliberately or maliciously committed an insider threat than when talking to someone who committed this offence by accident. Therefore, when the interviewer is confronted with someone whose behaviour they perceive as very different from their own character and intentions and as more morally questionable, they may excuse their smaller moral error (Pascal, 2019).

Further, as conscientious people value responsibility, reliability and give importance to rules and norms, they may feel less guilt around a person that maliciously violated these standards than someone who does not have malicious intentions and only violated these rules by accident (Fayard et al., 2012; Roberts et al., 2009, as cited in Fayard et al., 2012; John & Srivastava, 1999; Roberts et al., 2005). Also, they may be able to better connect with the accidental insider as they also just made an unintentional mistake which goes against their nature of being a conscientious person. Consequently, the following hypotheses are formulated.

H3: *The interviewer experiences more guilt after making a factual error when interacting with an accidental insider suspect than a deliberate insider suspect.*

H4: *Conscientiousness has a stronger positive effect on the relationship between making a factual error and the interviewer's feeling of guilt when interacting with an accidental insider suspect than a deliberate insider suspect.*

Response Strategies

Interviewers tend to respond differently to making a communication error. These reactions can be described as response strategies which can be divided into different categories. This study focuses on four of them, all of which were found in crisis negotiations and police interviews (Oostinga et al., 2018a, 2020). The first strategy is called ‘apology’ where the interviewer takes responsibility for their error and apologises for it. The second strategy is ‘exploration’ where the interviewer takes the opportunity to ask about the mistake. The third strategy is the ‘deflect’ response where the interviewer gives away their responsibility by for instance stating that they received the wrong information. Fourth, the ‘no alignment’ response does not fit into any of these categories and entails an unrelated response (e.g., asking for a break) (Oostinga et al., 2020). While apologising for the mistake indicates taking responsibility, the exploration response sets the focus on directly correcting the error, thereby taking somewhat less responsibility. Last, deflecting the

mistake, or using a no alignment response shows no responsibility taking of the error maker (Oostinga et al., 2018a, 2020).

Conscientiousness has been linked to an engaging and active coping style. This means, when a conscientious person makes a mistake, they will actively engage with the problem and try to recover from the situation by acknowledging their actions. After making a mistake, they may actively approach this error to 'reclaim' their conscientiousness (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2009; Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007; Eisenberg et al., 2014; Fayard et al., 2012). Moreover, they feel responsible for their actions, which indicates that they engage less with denial behaviour. Further, conscientiousness seems to have a positive influence on problem-solving and cognitive restructuring. As a result, they can focus their attention on the problem itself and control possible adverse thoughts to a degree where they do not impair their cognitive and problem-solving skills (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2009; Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007; Derryberry et al., 2003; Gartland et al., 2011). Therefore, it can be argued that conscientious people will take responsibility for their actions and opt for the more engaging response strategies such as apology and exploration over the strategy of deflect.

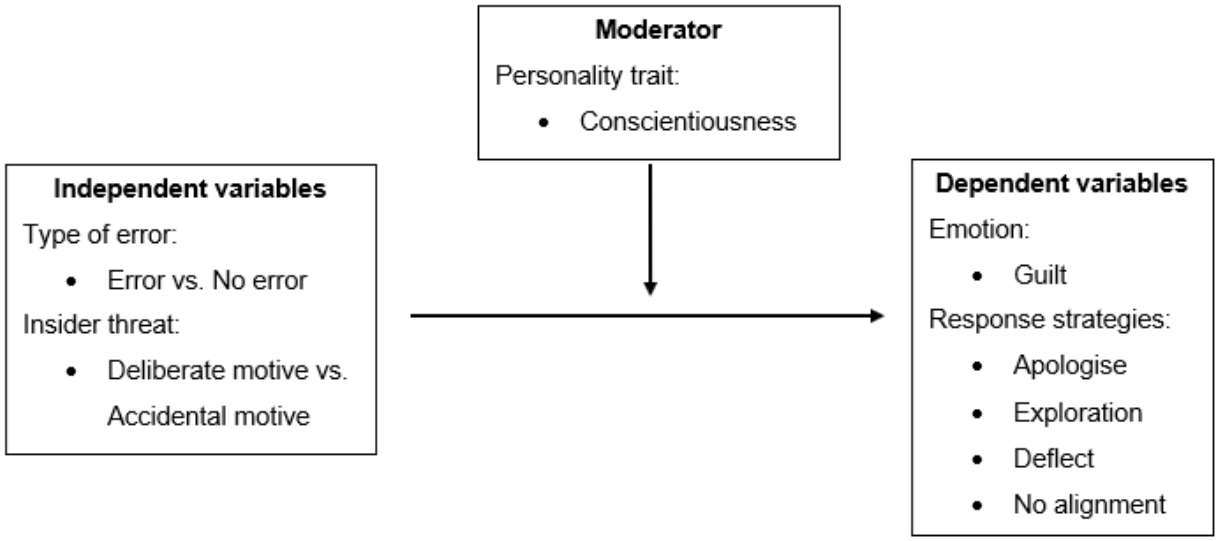
Next, the impact of insider motive on the response strategies and influence of conscientiousness will be discussed. As stated before, people that score high on conscientiousness are very self-controlled and act according to clear norms and behavioural rules (Fayard et al., 2012; Roberts et al., 2009, as cited in Fayard et al., 2012; John & Srivastava, 1999; Roberts et al., 2005). Moreover, they display high impulse control and take future consequences of their actions into account. Additionally, conscientiousness seems to promote problem-solving behaviour and the ability to control the expression of negative emotions (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2009). This planning behaviour and awareness of the consequences of their actions lead to the expectation that conscientious individuals will keep their engaging and problem-solving approach even when confronted with someone who does not adhere to their own values and violated those on purpose. Therefore, the pattern that conscientiousness leads to more use of the apology and exploration strategy and less use of the deflect strategy is expected to hold regardless of whether the motive of the suspect is presumably accidental or deliberate. Based on this, we hypothesise:

H5: *Interviewers high in conscientiousness make more use of the apology and the exploration strategy and less use of the deflect strategy after making a factual error than interviewers lower in this trait.*

Figure 1 gives an overview of the independent and dependent variables as well as the moderator variable.

Figure 1

Visualisation of moderation effect and research variables



Methods

Design

The present study had an experimental 2 (type of error: 'factual error' vs. 'no error') x 2 (motive: 'deliberate' vs. 'accidental') between-subjects design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of these conditions. Data collection was conducted together with three other bachelor students which resulted in the measurement of the three independent variables of conscientiousness, emotional resilience and error orientation. Further, the dependent variables of guilt, stress, shame, distraction, and response strategies were assessed. This study, however, only focused on the variables of *conscientiousness*, *guilt,* and *response strategies*.

Participants

To reach participants, convenience sampling was employed. Students from the University of Twente could sign up for the study through the platform *'SONA-system'* and earn 0.5 credits for participating. Participants from outside the university were reached through social media such as *WhatsApp* and *Instagram*. To be eligible for participation, participants had to give their informed consent, have sufficient skills in the English language and be 18 years of age or older. Additionally, two participants took part in pilot-testing but were not included in the dataset. In total, 116 people participated. Three participants who were in the error condition and did not make the needed communication error had to be excluded from the dataset. Besides, one participant whose first trial was interrupted while still filling out the pre-measures had to start their trial again at a later point in time. The interrupted trial was excluded from the dataset. After these adjustments, the final dataset included 112 participants.

Of this final sample, 51.8% of participants were female, 46.4% male, and 1.8% identified otherwise. Moreover, 64.3% of participants were Dutch, 27.7% were German, 1.8% had a different European nationality and 6.3% were from a non-European country. Further, the age of participants ranged from 18 to 67 (M = 23.77; SD = 7.76). Also, participants had different current degrees of education (Secondary school = 9.8%, Apprenticeship/MBO = 6.3%, Bachelors = 67.9%, Masters = 15.2%). Lastly, almost all participants (95.5%) indicated that they did not have professional experience with conducting workplace investigative interviews.

Materials

Conscientiousness

To measure conscientiousness, the Big Five Inventory (BFI) was used. The BFI consisted of 44 items that measured the personality dimensions of openness to experience, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism and conscientiousness (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998; John & Srivastava, 1999). This study, however, only focused on the 9-item conscientiousness subscale. The BFI questions had to be rated on a five-point Likert scale that ranged from 1 ("disagree strongly") to 5 ("agree strongly"). During the questionnaire, participants were asked to complete the statement of *"I see myself as someone who"* with items such as *"Does things efficiently"* and *"Makes plans and follows through with them"* (John & Srivastava, 1999). For analysis, reversed items were re-coded and the mean scores of the scale items were calculated, with a higher score indicating higher conscientiousness of the interviewer. In this study, the conscientiousness subscale reached acceptable reliability with Cronbach's alpha of .73.

Guilt

To measure the interviewer's feeling of guilt, the State Shame and Guilt Scale (SSGS) was chosen (Marschall, Sanftner, & Tangney, 1994, as cited in Cawley, 2018). The SSGS contains 15 items that assess the states of guilt, shame, and pride. However, the current study, only employed the five-item guilt subscale. Every question was answered on a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (not feeling this way at all) to 5 (feeling this way very strongly). To interpret the scale, mean scores were calculated with a higher score indicating a stronger experience of guilt. In the error and non-error conditions, participants were instructed to think back to the moment where they confronted the suspect with the USB. The specific role of the USB in the error manipulation will be explained later on. To assess the interviewer's feeling of guilt right after the error or confrontation, the original response items were changed to past tense (e.g., *"I felt remorse, regret"*) (Marschall, Sanftner, & Tangney, 1994, as cited in Cawley, 2018). Lastly, the SSGS guilt scale showed good reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .85.

Response Strategies

Next to the response strategies of apology, exploration, deflect and no alignment, two other strategies, namely accept and contradict were observed during the interviews and added to the coding scheme. Consequently, the dependent variable 'response strategy' had six levels which

were based on the response codings by Oostinga et al. (2020, 2018a). The coding was separated into the response strategy categories of 'apology', 'exploration', 'deflect', 'no alignment', 'accept', and 'contradict'. As the response strategies of accept, apology and no alignment were not employed as primary response strategies, they will not be mentioned with verbal examples in the following explanations. First, responses fell under the category of 'apology' when the interviewer addressed the error and accepted responsibility for their action. Second, the 'exploration' strategy consisted of investigative questions or notes (e.g., "Missing tablet, what missing tablet?"). Third, the 'deflect' responses were reactions that ascribed the responsibility for the error to another source (e.g., "Well I got the information that a USB stick is missing."). Fourth, the no alignment responses were reactions that were not connected to the error (Oostinga et al., 2020). Fifth, the accept strategy covered responses that accepted the making of an error and immediately adapted to the new information ("Yes... okay."). Sixth, the 'contradict' strategy included all responses that denied the making of an error (e.g., "No, it is about a USB stick.") (Oostinga et al., 2018a, 2020). After finishing the data collection, the researchers used the recorded interview videos to code the participants' verbal responses to the error and assign those to the response strategy category that was most prominent (primary). When another less prominent strategy was evident as well, it was coded as a 'secondary' response strategy. For coding, only the interviewer's responses directly after the error and until the next comment of the suspect were considered. This timeframe was chosen, as any unstandardized follow-up response of the suspect may influence the initial response strategies of the interviewer. Therefore, the interviewer's strategy may then depend on the additional response and not on the error. To determine the interrater reliability, the four researchers were divided into two pairs who independently coded the response strategies of about half the participants in the error condition each. Due to this, the interrater reliability had to be calculated for each coding pair. While the researchers knew about their own expectations and hypotheses, they did not know about the questionnaire scores of the participants whose responses they were coding. Afterwards, differences in response coding were debated by all four researchers and an agreement about the primary and secondary response coding was made. Using this method, the first coding pair, who analysed the responses of 29 participants, had a weak interrater agreement for the primary response strategies (Cohen's $\kappa = .58$) and the secondary response strategies (Cohen's $\kappa = .44$). The second coding pair, who coded the response strategies of 27 participants,

achieved a moderate interrater agreement for the response coding of the primary responses (Cohen's κ = .72) but no interrater agreement for the secondary response strategies (Cohen's κ = .15) (McHugh, 2012). Due to the low Cohen's kappa, we decided to not further focus on the secondary response strategy.

Interviewer Scenario, Motive, and Error Manipulation

In the interviewer scenario, participants were instructed to "*Imagine yourself in the following scenario, and try to act as realistically as possible."*. The presented case scenario was written like a story to encourage identification with the character and setting. The role participants were given was that of a human resource professional who was working for 'Volkswagen'. Moreover, one part of their job was to lead investigative interviews where they question employees about possible malpractices. Further, it was explained that they were asked to conduct one of these interviews with an employee called Alex Baker. This employee was the last one who signed up for using a USB stick that went missing around two weeks ago. After the alleged loss of the USB, a rival company had published a product of a very similar design to the one which was saved on the USB stick. This case description was followed by a list of evidence about the suspect. Examples of this evidence list were *"The employee has a good relationship with other colleagues who described them as a friendly and ambitious person that is good with everybody."* and *"Mr(s). Baker did not sign out for the used USB stick. This violates company policy, which states that all use of equipment should be registered."* (see Appendix A).

Depending on the motive condition the participant was in, their character drew different conclusions from this information. In the deliberate motive condition, participants were instructed that the suspect was expected to have deliberately given the USB-stick to the rival company while in the accidental motive condition, it was concluded that the suspect must have accidentally misplaced or lost the USB-stick. The rest of the interviewer scenario was the same in both conditions. Lastly, it followed a list of example questions the participants were encouraged to use during the interview. For instance, they could ask "*What did the employee do on the day the USB stick went missing?"* or *"Was there a change in their usual routine that day?"* (see Appendix A).

Furthermore, participants were manipulated into making a factual error. When the interviewer addressed the missing USB stick, the suspect, who was played by one of the four researchers, responded in one of two pre-scripted manners. In the no error condition, the suspect

went along with the conversation and replied *"Yes, there is a USB stick missing"*. However, when the interviewer addressed the missing USB stick in the error condition, the suspect responded with "*I thought this interview was about the missing tablet*". As a follow-up explanation, the phrase *"The design department's tablet containing all of its vital sketches is missing, not a USB stick"* was used (see Appendix B). By contradicting the previously presented information about the USB stick, participants should have the impression that they had confused the missing object and the topic of the interview and feel responsible for the error.

Motive Manipulation Check

A manipulation check was employed to test whether the motive manipulation during the interviewer scenario had worked, and participants had accepted their assigned presumed suspect motive (either deliberate or accidental). To test this, participants had to answer the question *"What was your first impression of the suspect's motive"* and could choose between four answer possibilities. Two items directly asked about the motive manipulation by stating: *"That the suspect had deliberately provided the competitor with the information"* (deliberate motive) and *"That the suspect had accidentally lost the information"* (accidental motive). The other two items stated that the suspect was thought to be innocent or that the interviewer could not reach a conclusion about the suspect's motive (see Appendix D).

Procedure

Prior to data collection, the study was assessed and accepted by the Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences Ethics Committee of the University of Twente. Due to the Covid-19 crisis, the experiment could not be done in person but was conducted online. Participants were given an identification number which was used to connect the participants' answers in Qualtrics with their video file, which was needed for later response coding. Further, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions.

At their chosen time slot, participants joined the Microsoft Teams call where the first researcher gave a short introduction about the study and clarified that they should not take notes while reading the interviewer scenario. This was instructed to prevent any complications with the error manipulation, as either writing down or not that a USB stick went missing could influence their reaction to the error after being told that this information was wrong. Then, participants were provided with the Qualtrics survey and had to sign an informed consent form which clarified that

their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any moment without explanation (see Appendix C). Following the consent form, participants filled out a pre-survey which assessed demographic data such as age, gender, nationality, level of education and whether they had professional experience with investigative interviewing. Next, their conscientiousness was measured. After completing this first part of the study, participants were presented with the correct 'Interviewer scenario' (see Appendix A). The focus was set on the lost USB by repeatedly bringing up the topic in the given evidence and example questions. Depending on the participants' motive condition, their character either concluded that the suspect had deliberately given the USB to a rival company (deliberate motive) or that the suspect had accidentally lost the USB (accidental motive). When the participant had read and understood the information, the second researcher (the suspect) was invited to join the call and the first researcher muted themselves and turned off their camera. The suspect was played interchangeably by one of the four researchers of which two were male and two were female. From this point on, the interview was audio and video recorded by using the recording option provided in Microsoft Teams.

After the interview started, the suspect answered all questions of the interviewer but did not bring up the topic of the USB stick. As soon as the interviewer mentioned the missing USB, the suspect responded with the appropriate pre-scripted error or no error response, depending on the error condition. During the remaining time of the interview, the suspect made use of previously determined background information. However, most of these responses were not standardised. In all conditions, the suspect denied any involvement with the insider activity or about handing the USB to an opponent. After around five minutes, the second researcher interrupted the interview by indicating that the time of the interview was over. Afterwards, the researcher who played the suspect left the call and the recording was stopped. The first researcher then instructed the participant to continue filling out the survey and to complete the post-measurements of their experience of guilt and then a manipulation check to inspect whether they had adopted the presented motive of their condition or had any doubts about the suspect's motive (see Appendix D). At the end of the study, participants were debriefed and given the opportunity to ask questions or withdraw their previously given consent (see Appendix E).

Results

Preliminary Analysis

To analyse the collected data, the statistics programme *SPSS* version 25 was employed. After the dataset was cleaned of invalid responses, the validity and reliability of the BFI conscientiousness subscale and the SSGS guilt subscale were examined. Furthermore, descriptive statistics of conscientiousness (M = 3.85, SD = .55) were assessed. Additionally, descriptive statistics of the dependent variable guilt, per motive and error condition were measured. As can be seen in Table 1, the interviewers' feelings of guilt in between the error condition and no error condition seemed to differ slightly (M = 1.93, SD = .76; M = 1.64; SD = .77). These outcomes stay similar, also when compared to the accidental and the deliberate motive condition. Furthermore, the gender of the researcher who played the suspect did not influence the interviewers' experiences of guilt, or their behvaioural response strategies (see Appendix F).

Table 1

Descriptive statistics of the guilt experienced by the interviewers per motive and error condition.

Presumed motive	Accidental		Deliberate		Combined motives	
	Error	No error	Error	No Error	Error	No Error
n	29	28	27	28	56	56
Mean	1.91	1.65	1.95	1.62	1.93	1.64
SD	.83	.83	.69	.72	.76	.77
Min	1	1	1	1	1	1
Max	4	3.83	3.67	3.50	4	3.83

Motive Manipulation Check

Additionally, the outcomes of the motive manipulation check were inspected. For the manipulation check, it is expected that participants in the accidental motive condition would opt for the answer that the suspect had accidentally lost the Tablet/USB, while in the deliberate motive condition it is expected that participants would assume that the suspect had deliberately given the Tablet/USB to the rival company. However, cross-tabulation revealed that this was often not the case. In the accidental condition, 7% of participants believed that the suspect was innocent, 15.8%

that the suspect had deliberately provided the competitor with the information, 42.1% that the suspect had accidentally lost the information and 35.1% could not reach a conclusion on the suspect's motive. In the deliberate condition, 9.1% thought that the suspect was innocent, 23.6% believed that the suspect had deliberately provided the competitor with the information, 18.2% that the suspect had accidentally lost the information and lastly 49.1% could not reach a conclusion on the suspect's motive. Further, the Chi-Square Test indicates that there is no significant relation between the accidental motive, X^2 (3, n = 57) = 1.85, p = .60, or the deliberate motive condition and the manipulation check, X^2 (3, n= 55) = 1.31, p = .73. This indicates that the previously presented suspect motive manipulation had no relation with the opinion interviewers had about the suspects intentions after the interview.

Furthermore, to test whether there was a relation between the presumed suspect motive and the answer options directly connected to the motive manipulation, another Chi-Square Test was conducted. Namely, only the answer options that the suspect had deliberately provided the rival with the information and that the suspect had accidentally lost the information were included. The model revealed a non-significant relation between the accidental motive X^2 (1, n = 33) = 1.64, p = .20 as well as the deliberate motive condition and the manipulation check X^2 (1, n = 23) = 1.85, p = .31. Therefore, the motive manipulation did not relate with the directly connected opinions of the manipulation check about whether the suspect was believed to be an accidental or deliberate insider suspect. While placing the manipulation check after the interviewers had completed the interview showed how well the initial motive manipulation about the suspect's intentions holds up after interacting with the suspect, it does not give information about the interviewers first impression about the suspect before their interaction. Due to this misplacement, it cannot be concluded that the motive manipulation did work or not, which is why it was still included as an independent variable.

Hypothesis Testing

To test the first four hypotheses, a general linear model was employed. In this model, guilt represented the dependent variable while the error/non-error and deliberate/accidental motive conditions functioned as independent variables. Additionally, conscientiousness was added as a moderator and continuous predictor. The model specified the main effect of the motive condition as well as the main effect of the error condition. Further, a two-way interaction between

conscientiousness and the error condition was defined. Lastly, the model contained a three-way interaction between the variables of conscientiousness, error condition and motive condition.

The analysis of the results for the first hypothesis, which stated that the interviewer's guilt after making a factual error would be stronger than when no error was made, showed a statistically non-significant main effect of the error and non-error condition on the interviewer's experience of guilt, $F(1, 105) = .00$, $p = .99$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$. These results indicated that the interviewer did not experience more feelings of guilt after making a factual error than when no error was made.

Furthermore, the analysis of the results for the second hypothesis, that conscientiousness leads to more guilt after making a factual error showed a non-significant interaction between conscientiousness and the main effect of the error condition, $F(2,105) = 2.58$, $p = .08$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. Therefore, it can be concluded that conscientiousness did not lead to a stronger experience of guilt after making a factual error, rejecting the second hypothesis.

Additionally, the third hypothesis, that an interviewer's experience of guilt after making a factual error would be stronger when interacting with a suspect that is assumed to have an accidental insider motive than a deliberate insider motive was analysed. The analysis showed a non-significant interaction between the main effect of presumed motive on the interviewer's experience of guilt, $F(1,105) = 1.02$, $p = .31$, $\eta_p^2 = .01$. Consequently, hypothesis three had to be rejected as interviewers did not seem to experience more guilt after making a factual error when interacting with a presumed accidental insider suspect compared to a presumed deliberate suspect.

Next, the fourth hypothesis stated that conscientiousness was expected to have a stronger positive effect on guilt after making a factual error when the interviewer interacts with a suspect that was presumed to have an accidental inside motive than a suspect with a presumed deliberate motive. However, the three-way interaction effect of the motive and error condition together with conscientiousness indicated a non-significant interaction between the factors on the interviewer's experience of guilt, $F(2,105) = .52$, $p = .59$ $\eta_p^2 = .01$. These results implied that the interviewer's experience of guilt was not influenced by the interplay of the presumed suspect motive, factual error, and conscientiousness. Consequently, hypothesis four had to be rejected as well.

Before testing the fifth hypothesis, frequencies of the response strategies were assessed. The interviewers' response strategies revealed that neither the ‘apology’ nor the ‘no alignment’

response had been coded as a primary (most prominent) reaction after the error (see Table 2). Therefore, these variables could not be included in the analysis.

To test the fifth hypothesis: *Interviewers high in conscientiousness make more use of the apology and the exploration strategy and less use of the deflect strategy after making a factual error than interviewers lower in this trait,* a multinomial logistic regression analysis of the most prominent (primary) response strategies as the dependent variable, conscientiousness as the independent variable and deflect as the reference category was conducted. As the contradict and accept responses were only later added to the coding scheme and not part of this hypothesis, they were excluded from this analysis. The data showed a non-significant effect of conscientiousness on the primary response strategy of explore (B = -.33, SE = .69, p = .63). Therefore, conscientiousness did not affect the included response strategies and hypothesis five had to be rejected.

Table 2

Number and percentages of the interviewers' response strategies after making a factual error

Response strategy	n	%
Deflect	15	26.8
Exploration	12	21.4
Contradict	28	50
Accept	1	1.8

Note. The response strategies of 'apology' and 'no alignment' were not employed as primary response strategies.

Additional Analysis

While conducting the investigative interviews, we added the additional response strategies of accept and contradict to the coding scheme. Due to this, it was decided to perform an additional multinomial logistic regression including the response strategy of contradict. As the accept response was coded only once as a primary strategy, it was excluded from this analysis (see Table 2). To analyse the effect of conscientiousness on the contradict response strategy, the strategy was added to the dependent variable of response strategies. Further, conscientiousness was employed as an independent variable while deflect again was set as the reference category. The analysis indicated a non-significant effect of conscientiousness on the response strategy of exploration (*B*

= -44, *SE* =.70, *p* = .53), and contradict (*B* = .68, *SE* = .59, *p* = .26). Therefore, conscientiousness did not have an effect on the use of the contradict response in comparison to the employment of the deflect response.

While this study focused on conscientiousness and its effect on guilt and response strategies, it had also been suggested that the feeling of guilt, which is connected to evaluating an action as morally wrong, may encourage reparative behaviours (Muris et al., 2018; Tracy & Robins, 2004). It was decided to analyse this dependent variable to gain a better understanding about how this factor may have influenced interviewers' behavioural responses and possibly give an indication about how important guilt, independently of personality, is in the context of this investigative interview. To test this effect, an additional multinomial logistic regression analysis was conducted to test for the effect of guilt on the response strategies. The model included guilt as the independent variable, and the response strategies, including contradict, as a dependent variable while deflect was set as the reference category. The model indicated that guilt had a significant effect on the contradict response (*B* = -.14, *SE* = .48, *p* = .02), while the effect of guilt on the exploration response was non-significant (*B* = -.53, *SE* = .51, *p* = .29). These results indicate that interviewers who experienced higher guilt after making a factual error were less likely to employ the contradict response, compared to the deflect behavioural response strategy.

Discussion

This study investigated how factual communication errors and perceived motives of insider threat suspects may influence an interviewer's experience of guilt and their behavioural response strategies in the context of a workplace investigative interview. Moreover, to add to the understanding of how the interviewer's personality might influence emotional and behavioural responses to errors and presumed motives, the character trait of conscientiousness as a moderating and predicting factor on guilt and response strategies was assessed.

Main Findings

Contrary to the hypothesis, interviewers did not experience more guilt after making a factual error compared to when they did not. Also, they did not experience more guilt after making an error when interacting with a presumed accidental insider suspect than a presumed deliberate suspect. Furthermore, conscientiousness did not lead to more experience of guilt after making a factual error and did not cause more guilt when the interviewer made a factual error when interacting with a presumed accidental suspect than a deliberate suspect. Lastly, conscientiousness did not seem to affect the interviewers' response strategies.

The Impact of Factual Errors and Conscientiousness

Against expectations, interviewers' experience of guilt did not differ after making a factual error or not and conscientiousness did not promote more feelings of guilt after a factual mistake. These findings stand in contrast to previous literature which found that (factual) errors in work contexts, crisis negotiation or police interview settings led to an increase in guilt, and that conscientious individuals are more prone to experience this emotion (Abraham & Pane, 2014; Fayard et al., 2012; Oostinga et al., 2020; Rausch & Seifried, 2017). The characteristics of guilt however may give an indication about this unexpected result. As pointed out by Tracy and Robins (2004), the feeling of guilt often occurs when someone negatively evaluates their behaviour because it does not meet their moral standards. In addition to that, Bohns and Flynn (2013), point out that a necessary predecessor for guilt is that individuals feel like they had control over the adverse event which then resulted in negative consequences for someone else. However, the interviewers might not think of their factual error as causing any maladaptive consequences for the suspect, as in most cases it was directly corrected and did not seem to have a strong potential to cause harm for the other party, which in turn could have diminished their guilt. Connected to

this, the current communication error may have had different characteristics than the previously discussed errors studied in work-related error research. For instance, when comparing the communication error to work-related mistakes such as medical errors, it may be that these were more likely to cause immediate and clear consequences for the other party (Schwappach & Boluarte, 2008; Sirriyeh et al., 2010; Rausch & Seifried, 2017; Rybowiak et al., 1999). While these studies were also set in a work setting, differences between the types of errors and clarity of consequences may have led to higher experiences of guilt than the communication error of the current study. Furthermore, while Oostinga et al. (2020), did investigate communication errors, the stakes for the interviewer may seem higher and consequences of a mistake more detrimental when they are operating within an official police context and crisis negotiations where their mistake could cause immense and direct damage for the operation and the involved suspect or other party.

Perception of the error may also affect conscientious interviewers, who were expected to experience more guilt due to their awareness of consequences and the importance of responsibility (Fayard et al., 2012; Roberts et al., 2005). However, when they did not evaluate their communication error to cause any long-, or short-term consequences for the suspect and the feeling of responsibility diminished by a lack of control over the communication error, they may be less likely to experience guilt as well. Even when conscientious interviewers were more prone to feel guilt after the error, their ability of adaptive emotional coping should be considered. Consequently, negative effects may have been counteracted by conscientious people's capability to cope more adequately with stressful situations and handle their emotions (Barańczuk, 2019). Specifically, coping strategies that have been connected to conscientiousness are accepting mistakes, making a reappraisal of the event or being mindful and less judging about their error, which could help them to feel less strongly about their mistake and diminish possible negative effects such as guilt (Barańczuk, 2019).

Moreover, conscientiousness did not lead to more use of the engaging response strategy of exploration after making a factual error. Besides, as was revealed in an additional analysis, it also had no effect on the contradict response. Nonetheless, as was indicated before, conscientious individuals might have not perceived their factual error as having great negative consequences for the suspect or may think that it was out of their control. Connected to this, there was great

employment of the contradict response in comparison to every other response. This unequal distribution may indicate that interviewers did not consider that they had made an error but possibly that the suspect was misinformed, that the denial of a USB stick was a form of strategy or that the researchers had made a mistake. All these assumptions were also indicated by a few participants after the experiment. Thus, their appraisal of the context and situation may have affected their guilt, but also their behavioural response strategies.

At this point, it might be interesting to consider the effect of guilt on response strategies, which was associated with less use of the contradict response. That more guilt related to less contradicting of responsibility is in line with other literature which suggests a link between guilt and responsibility-taking (Silfver, 2007). Nonetheless, no significant effect between guilt and the more engaging coping strategies as the exploration response was found. This may again point into the direction of context as it has been argued that guilt causes more reparative behaviour when the individual knows how to adequately deal with their emotions and repair the situation (Bybee et al., 1998, as cited in Silfver, 2007; Silfver; 2007).

The importance of context is supported by DeLongis and Holtzman (2005), who state that coping strategies, even when controlled by personality types, can vary strongly depending on the specific context of the situation. Hence, competency, understanding, and context may also point to an explanation why conscientiousness did not affect the response strategies and interviewers high in conscientiousness did not choose more engaging response strategies (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2009; Connor-Smith & Flachsbart, 2007). Therefore, depending on their specific interview perception, they might have tried different approaches to solve the apparent miscommunication.

The Impact of Presumed Motive, Factual Errors, and Conscientiousness

Moreover, there seemed to be no influence of the presumed insider motive on interviewers' behavioural and emotional responses. Specifically, against expectations, interviewers did not experience more guilt in the deliberate compared to the accidental condition after making an error. The same pattern was found for conscientiousness, which indicated that individuals with high conscientiousness did not differ in their emotional reactions compared to interviewers with lower scores on this trait. Consequently, it seems that their tendencies to be responsible and adhering to their own and others' standards of behaviour did not affect how they emotionally reacted to their error in front of a person that also accidentally made a mistake or someone who deliberately

violated these guidelines (Fayard et al., 2012; Roberts et al., 2009, as cited in Fayard et al., 2012; Roberts et al., 2005). Moreover, to make sure that the non-significant effects of conscientiousness were not caused by a too narrow distribution of this trait in our study population, descriptive statistics of conscientiousness were considered. The results indicate that conscientiousness did not seem to vary too little between participants and was at a mean level that is consistent with the outcomes also found in other studies researching this trait (Srivastava et al., 2003).

Furthermore, also irrespectively of conscientiousness, it seems that the presumed suspect motive did not play a role in the interviewers' feelings of guilt after making a factual error. This outcome contradicts the argumentation that due to the presumed suspect motive, the interviewer would evaluate the suspect who (just like them) made an accidental mistake more favourably than a presumed deliberate insider suspect. Specifically, as guilt is connected to moral behaviour, it was expected that this emotion would be felt stronger when interacting with someone who is deemed more morally acceptable and similar to us (Cushman et al., 2013; Gino et al., 2010; Pascal, 2019; Tracy & Robins, 2004).

Nonetheless, a factor to consider is how participants interpreted the presented motive. As indicated by Nobes et al. (2009), while the suspect who supposedly lost the tablet/USB was expected to be less morally questionable to the interviewer than the deliberate insider, the interviewer might have seen the suspect's failure to stick to company policies as being careless and negligent of their duties instead of simply being involved in an accident. This appraisal would stand in contrast to the interviewer's form of error who only confused the topic of an interview (Nobes et al., 2009). Additionally, people do not only evaluate actions based on their intentions but also take consequences into account. This may explain why interviewers did not seem to emotionally differentiate between the two types of insiders. It might be that the interviewers had a stronger focus on the consequences of the suspect's actions which could have resulted in the so-called outcome bias where actions are interpreted and evaluated based on the outcome and less on the intent and process behind the action (Cushman et al., 2013; Gino et al., 2010; Gino et al., 2008). This emphasis would then diminish any differences between the accidental and deliberate suspect. This focus on consequences may also be an additional explanation for why conscientious individuals did not differentiate between the insiders' motives. Besides the possibility of outcome bias, it may be that the values of conscientiousness are not applied to other individuals. As there

is no mentioned judging element of conscientiousness, the personality trait may not cause individuals to extend their own standards onto other people.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

After discussing the findings of this study, the main limitations, and recommendations for future research can be examined. First, although the study focused on investigative interviews, which would be conducted by either human resources or otherwise trained professionals, most participants had no prior experience with handling investigative interviews. This limitation was a necessary compromise due to the scope of this bachelor thesis. To counteract this restriction, a scenario describing the tasks of an investigative interviewer and a short background description was used to encourage identification with the interviewer. This might have helped participants to imagine how a person in that position might behave and what their responsibilities are. Therefore, their behaviour and emotional responses may come a bit closer to that of actual work investigative interviewers. Nevertheless, the original limitation remains. Participants may not react in a way trained professionals would, due to their lack of training and work experience and may therefore intuitively opt for other response strategies than someone with more expertise. Furthermore, errors may be experienced differently by someone that is not fully aware of the consequences their mistake may have for the company, their position, or the suspect. For future research, and to gain a more accurate representation of how professional interviewers would react and feel during this task and after an error, it would be recommended to recruit trained professionals who are experienced in this line of work and have the proper skills as well as awareness of what responsibilities are connected to conducting investigative interviews.

Second, the study was conducted online and as a role-play where the suspect was played by the four researchers and not a professional actor. This might have affected how realistic the interview was perceived by the participants and in turn how they emotionally experienced and acted within the situation. Consequently, interviewers' response strategies or their level of guilt could have differed depending on how serious the situation was experienced. Nonetheless, the researchers stuck to the appropriate script and the background information very closely, which may speak in favour of the comparability between experiments. Unfortunately, it was not assessed if participants experienced the study as being realistic or believable. Future research may want to control for these limitations by hiring a professional that plays the suspect during all interviews

and conduct the study in a more life-like setting. It should be noted that the study by Oostinga et al. (2020), who investigated factual errors in crisis negotiation and police interview settings, and which was used as a guiding point for the effect of factual errors did consider both the first and second main limitation. Thus, it may be that these factors played a role in the observed effects in her study and a lack of findings in the current research.

The third limitation of this study may be that the factual error was possibly not strong enough to cause feelings of possible consequences as the error was only concerned about the nature of a missing object while no consequences for the suspect nor the interviewer were implied due to the error made. Further, when the factual error was rather weak, it may have caused participants to believe they had not made an error at all or to rather see it as a minor misunderstanding. This may have diminished the emotional responses of interviewers as well as affected their behavioural response strategies for some participants that may see the error more as an inconvenience rather than a full error and feel less need to correct the situation. To counteract uncertainty about the error effect in the future, it is advisable to use stronger factual errors that are not likely to be confused with technicalities. For instance, in the study by Oostinga et al. (2020), the interviewer was tricked into saying the wrong name of the other party which might be perceived as a risk to the interview and suspect relationship, more so than wrongly naming an object.

Fourth, the motive manipulation check was unable to assess whether the manipulation worked. As the manipulation check was placed after the interview, participants' first impression about the suspect's motive could not be assessed and only their opinion about the suspect after their interaction was measured. Due to this misplacement, it cannot be guaranteed that the manipulation of the suspect's intention was accepted by the interviewer. Therefore, the chance that participants did not understand the presumed suspect motive remains. When the motive manipulation did not work, it could affect the analysis concerning the influence of motive and exclude the possibility for any effects of this predictor in this research. Hence, the manipulation check should be placed before the interview. Besides, employing a Likert scale instead of independent answer possibilities could help participants to indicate their impression of the suspect's motive without needing to make a harsh decision.

Fifth, while the experiment was conducted in English, this was not the native language for almost all participants who were predominantly German or Dutch. This limitation had to be

accepted to gain enough participants, as the researchers were employing convenience sampling in the Netherlands and Germany. While sufficient English skills were a requirement to take part, there were still noticeable differences in the levels of English which sometimes led to misunderstandings during the interviews and may have affected the behavioural responses, depending on how quick and accurate participants could react in their second language. This limitation can be easily overcome by conducting research in the participant's and suspect's native language.

Last, one limitation occurred during the coding of response strategies as the coding of the interviews was split between the four researchers, which resulted in low interrater reliability. While discussing the coding, it became apparent that some of the researchers had a slightly different understanding about how much of the body language or intonation was taken into consideration when determining the response strategies and which strategy was more prominent. This slight difference may have been exaggerated as two instead of one coding pair were interpreting the response strategies. Even after re-coding, interrater reliability was weak/moderate for the primary response strategy and weak/not existent for the secondary response strategy. Consequently, the secondary response strategy, which could have been used as an additional analysis and a better understanding of combinations between behavioural responses could not be further analysed. A recommendation for future research would be to clearly indicate what factors besides the direct response are considered when deciding on the primary and secondary strategies and to limit the coding to one pair to counteract an increase of disagreements.

Additional Recommendations for Future Research

As indicated in the discussion, a factor that should be considered in future research is outcome bias. When considering the possible consequences for both the suspect and company in work investigative interviews, it may be crucial to consider what role this kind of bias may play in interviewers' evaluations of suspects. Thus, future research may test for the influence of this bias on a work investigative interviewer in connection to communication errors and different combinations of suspect motives.

Furthermore, it may be interesting for future researchers to further investigate the consequences of conscientiousness on the judgement of others. This study did not find any differences between the experience of guilt in conscientious individuals in the accidental or

deliberate motive condition, however, it may be a next step to further investigate the reasons for this indifference. Therefore, it should be investigated how conscientious values are affecting the judgement of others to gain an understanding of its role in work investigative contexts and research whether it should be considered in practice and training. To test this in the future, studies may measure how conscientiousness affects the judgement of other individuals by presenting them with different pairings of intentions and outcomes of actions.

Conclusion

This study investigated the emotional and behavioural influences of factual errors and presumed suspect motives on workplace investigative interviewers in an insider investigation. Against expectations, the results indicated no effect of conscientiousness, presumed insider motive and factual communication errors on the experience of guilt and response strategies of interviewers. However, guilt seemed to lead to less employment of the contradict response strategy.

In general, we have collected first indications that there is no effect of errors or presumed motives and conscientiousness on either response strategies or guilt. Nonetheless, more research in this area is needed as this was one of the first studies to investigate the combination of work investigations with the focus of insider threat/motive and communication errors. For this reason, the study had to deal with novel experimental problems which also gave rise to many recommendations for future research, such as recruiting professional interviewers, creating appropriate factual errors and manipulation measures. Continuing this research is important both for companies as well as suspects who both can be faced with great consequences, depending on the conduction and outcome of investigative interviews. This research may help both parties by shedding light on the influence of personality, communication errors and biases that can affect the handling of cases such as insider accusations and suspects in work investigative interviews. Additionally, it may also give practical indications about what behaviours, emotions, and personality characteristics should be discussed in training to provide interviewers with accurate communication tools to apply to their work and deal with insider threat suspects in the most appropriate manner.

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Appendix A

Interviewer Scenarios

Accidental motive scenario

Imagine yourself in the following scenario, and try to act as realistically as possible.

You are a human resource professional for the company 'Volkswagen', for which you have been working for 10 years now. One of your tasks as a human resource manager is leading investigative interviews. As an investigative interviewer you already interviewed a lot of people in the company that were under suspicion of breaking the company's policy or engaged in malpractice.

Yesterday, one of the department managers called and told you that there was an incident in the design department. More specifically, two weeks ago, a USB stick with the designs for a new important project went missing. After this incident, a competing company publicly revealed their plans for the production of a new car with a similar look to the design saved on the lost USB. On the day the USB went missing the employee (Alex Baker) was the last one who signed up for using it. Therefore, you are asked to investigate the incident by interviewing Mr(s). Baker, a 30 year old product designer, about the possible crime.

To prepare for the investigative interview, you begin to collect information about Mr(s). Baker.

Evidence

- The employee has a good relationship with other colleagues who described them as a friendly and ambitious person that is good with everybody.
- Mr(s). Baker did not sign out for the used USB stick. This violates company policy, which states that all use of equipment should be registered.
- Mr(s). Baker had several discussions with the manager about being dissatisfied with their pay grade, however all requests for an increased pay were denied.
- You hear from a colleague that Alex Baker has considered quitting the job in the past, but has not yet done so.

Your conclusions

Based on this information you believe that Mr(s). Baker has accidentally misplaced or lost the USB stick, which could give someone else the chance to copy the design or take the stick with

them. You base this idea on the evidence that the employee is said to be a very ambitious and involved worker. Further, despite the frequent requests for a higher salary they have not left the company. Also, the fact that Alex did not sign out for borrowing the equipment is unusual. During the interview, do not give all this information right away but try to ask directed questions to understand the suspects point of view. The goal of the interview, you are about to conduct, is to find out more about Mr(s). Baker and if they are involved in the leak of company information. During the interview you should treat Mr(s). Baker with respect and in a professional manner.

Interview guide:

- At the beginning of the interview, check the background information of the employee that was stated above (e.g., their name, age, job and tasks)
- What did the employee do on the day the USB stick went missing?
- Was there a change in their usual routine that day?
- How satisfied are they with their current job?

The duration of the interview will be about 5 minutes.

Deliberate motive scenario

Imagine yourself in the following scenario, and try to act as realistically as possible

You are a human resource professional for the company 'Volkswagen', for which you have been working for 10 years now. One of your tasks as a human resource manager is leading investigative interviews. As an investigative interviewer you already interviewed a lot of people in the company that were under suspicion of breaking the company's policy or engaged in malpractice. Yesterday, one of the department managers called and told you that there was an incident in the design department. More specifically, two weeks ago, a USB stick with the designs for a new important project went missing. After this incident, a competing company publicly revealed their plans for the production of a new car with a similar look to the design saved on the lost USB. On the day the USB went missing the employee (Alex Baker) was the last one who signed up for using it. Therefore, you are asked to investigate the incident by interviewing Mr(s). Baker, a 30 year old product designer, about the possible crime.

To prepare for the investigative interview, you begin to collect information about Mr(s). Baker.

Evidence

- The employee has a good relationship with other colleagues who described them as a friendly and ambitious person that is good with everybody.
- Mr(s). Baker did not sign out for the used USB stick. This violates company policy, which states that all use of equipment should be registered.
- Mr(s). Baker had several discussions with the manager about being dissatisfied with their pay grade, however all requests for an increased pay were denied.
- You hear from a colleague that Alex Baker has considered quitting the job in the past, but has not yet done so.

Your conclusions

Based on this information you believe that Mr(s). Baker has given the USB-stick to a rival company. You base this idea on the evidence that although the employee appears to be a very ambitious and involved worker, they have also frequently requested a higher salary and thought about leaving the company. Further, the fact that Alex did not sign out for borrowing the equipment is unusual. During the interview, do not give all this information right away but try to ask directed questions to understand the suspects point of view. The goal of the interview, you are about to conduct, is to find out more about Mr(s). Baker and if they are involved in the leak of company information. During the interview you should treat Mr(s). Baker with respect and in a professional manner.

Interview guide:

- At the beginning of the interview, check the background information of the employee that was stated above (e.g., their name, age job and tasks)
- What did the employee do on the day the USB stick went missing?
- Was there a change in their usual routine that day?
- How satisfied are they with their current job?

The duration of the interview will be about 5 minutes.

Appendix B
Suspect Script and Background Information

Context / Background information

Imagine yourself in the following situation and try to act as realistically as possible. You are a 30 year old automobile designer at a Volkswagen manufacturing plant in Wolfsburg. You have been employed there now for about 6 years. During the years you have slowly grown dissatisfied with your monthly pay grade. Several discussions with your managers have led to no avail, the management did not want to raise your pay. You feel like you are underpaid for your efforts and the experience you bring in.

Currently, you and your team are working on an exciting new project, the design of a new advanced electric model. Your task is to make sketches for the exterior of the car. Although you enjoy the actual drawing process most, your job also involves a lot of planning, developing concepts, revising, and having meetings with the art directors. You take your work seriously. You work very orderly and follow the deadlines tightly. Besides doing the necessary administration in the company's shared file system, you also make copies of your design work at the end of each shift.

A few weeks ago, a message popped up in your work's group chat that stated that the department's shared *tablet/USB-stick* containing vital sketches was missing from your design department's storage. It is a tablet/USB-stick that you use often to store your finalized sketches. In the meantime, a few weeks passed until news broke that the competing car manufacturer showcased a new model with headlights that shared an uncanny resemblance with those of the design you and your team were working on.

Your direct manager has called you and you told that there is a human resource professional that wants to have a video call with you. When you open the HR-interviewer video call you are told that you are interviewed about a leak of sensitive information within the company. Although you have no clue what exactly happened, you are willing to answer all questions and tell your side of the story to the best of your ability.

Essential answers

When the interviewer starts the conversation, try to answer all questions. But, **never** take the initiative in mentioning the *tablet/USB stick* was missing. Always, let the interviewer initiate this topic.

It is possible that the interviewer mentions the missing of a USB stick containing the sketches. Then, there are two possible scenarios:

1. **No Error**: The interviewer correctly indicates a USB stick containing the sketches is missing. In this scenario, the interviewer has a correct understanding of the missing object. You always respond with "*Yes, there is a USB stick is missing."*
    a. If you are asked a specific question start with this sentence, and pause irrespective of what the answer after it is supposed to be. Make it a memorable pause as if you are thinking.
2. **Error**: The interviewer falsely claims a USB stick containing the sketches was lost, as in reality a tablet was lost.
    a. React surprised, and slightly frustrated whilst responding with the following sentence: *"I thought this interview was about the missing tablet."* After the initial response by the interviewer to this statement, irrespective of the response that is given, you always follow up with: "*The design department's tablet containing all of its vital sketches is missing, not a USB stick."* Use the same intonation as the sentence before.

Whenever asked how it is possible that you were the last one registered to have used the USB stick/Tablet respond with: *the USB stick/tablet is also used by people who do not register for its usage. It may have happened like that. I don't know.*

Whenever asked about your daily routine, or about the day the USB stick/Tablet went missing, respond with an outline of the following:

1. Checking in at the office,

2. Looking at your scheduled appointments,

3.Opening your email to check for news, responding when necessary.

3. Start working your way through the appointments,

4. At the end of the day you always schedule time to work on the design after which you draw some additional doodles for working at home.

5. Shut the systems down, clean up your desk, store the sketches on the USB stick /Tablet.

6. Check out at the office.

Whenever asked about anything working-related (your bosses, deadlines, projects etc.) always respond in an upbeat manner, you appreciate all of it. The only subject you are dissatisfied with is your current pay grade, whenever asked about this respond with: *"Although I am not really paid [50.000 Euro] what I am worth, I am content with it*."

Whenever the interviewer makes any statement about your possible guilt: "*The only thing that I can do is tell you my side of the story, but I have not done anything wrong."* In all situations you deny involvement.

Whenever asked about whether the competing company has stolen the files, or when asked about the guilt of other individuals respond with: *"Of course that might be possible, but in my opinion, it can also be coincidence. I've seen plenty of designs in the past which looked alike, it happens."*

Whenever asked about details that happened in days before the missing of the USB stick, respond with *"Oh sorry, I honestly can't remember. A lot of time has passed since."*

If the interviewer asks a question that is not work-related try to answer them by either using the demographics below or by making something up:

- Age: 30 years old.
- Sex: based on who takes the role of the interviewee.
- Educational attainment: MSc in graphic design
- Employment status: permanent contract, first company you worked for after your MSc.
- Occupation: graphic designer.
- Home situation: one partner working in a primary school as a teacher.

- Nationality: German.

Before the start of the interview, one of the researchers will indicate which scenario (Error / No error) needs to be adhered to. *Try to act as naturally as possible and try to behave as similar as possible towards all interviewers. Furthermore, it is of importance to try to answer* ***all*** *questions that come up.*

Appendix C

Consent Form

Welcome to our study about investigative interviewing!

Our study focuses on the initial interactions between interviewers and suspects during investigative interviews, and how personality and other traits may influence behaviour and feelings in this situation. This study is part of the researchers' psychology BSc thesis at the University of Twente.

In a few minutes you will have the opportunity to lead an interview yourselves. To question an employee who is suspected of leaking confidential information about the company you are working in. After reading the information below you are asked to complete a questionnaire about demographics, your personality and other traits. Following that we will provide you with an information sheet about the suspect, evidence you can bring up during the interview and example questions you may make use of. Make sure you read this information attentively as it can help you conduct the interview. This means you don't have to worry about finding things to say!

The questionnaire is interrupted with a break half way, which is indicated with a large red stop sign. At this point we ask you to keep the survey opened, and return to the Teams call. The researcher will ask the suspect to join, and the interview will start. After the interview we will ask you to continue with the questionnaire where you left off, this last part will be focused on how you experienced the interview.

After your participation

You are always eligible to request correction of and access to any personal data captured within one week after participation. Extracted data may, in *anonymous* form, be shared for additional research.

Good to know

The total duration of this study will be approximately 30 minutes.

Participation in this study is, and always remains, voluntary. You can withdraw from this study at any moment, without having to give an explanation. Participation does not come with anticipated

risks. The raw data captured during this research, will be used for analyses only. This data will be kept anonymized. Audio- and/or video recordings will be securely saved after the interview took place and will in no instance be made public without your consent. To ensure your privacy we will make use of the identification number you just have received, therefore we do not use names or other personal information. You are eligible to request removal of, correction of and access to any personal data captured within one week after participation. If you have any questions during, between or after the study you are always welcome to contact the researchers for questions, remarks or complaints.

If you currently have questions about the information above you can just hop back to the Teams call where the researcher is present. If you happen to have questions after participation, feel free to contact us:

Contact persons for this research:

Mees Groen: m.a.groen-1@student.utwente.nl
Ilona Gerwin: i.gerwin@student.utwente.nl
Timon Ajoori: t.j.ajoori@student.utwente.nl
Leonie Böhm: l.boehm@student.utwente.nl
This study is supervised by:
Dr. Oostinga: m.s.d.oostinga@utwente.nl
Dr. 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 of the Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente via ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl

Please tick the boxes below to indicate your agreement

Please tick the appropriate boxes

- I have read and understood the study information. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to participate and that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason.
- I understand that taking part in the study involves capturing demographics, and a video-recording of me role-playing during an interview.
- I understand that the video recording will be transcribed, and that the footage will be stored in a safe place.
- I understand that information I provide will be used for fulfilment of an academic thesis, (recordings will be anonymized and may be used to present academic work at a conference or within an academic journal publication)
- I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me will not be shared beyond the research team.
- I give permission that statements I make during the interview may be quoted in the research outputs.

Appendix D

Manipulation Check

What was your first impression of the suspect's motive?

- ○ That the suspect was innocent.
- ○ That the suspect had deliberately provided the competitor with the information.
- ○ That the suspect had accidentally lost the information.
- ○ I could not reach a conclusion on the suspect's motive.

Appendix E

Debrief

The Effects of Presumed Motive and Error Making in an Organisational Interview Context

Thank you for participation in this interview study! As you were aware this study focuses on the communication process within interview settings. The goal of this research is to research how **communication errors** (saying the wrong missing object) by **interviewers** affect the way they feel, think and behave. Further, it was researched whether an interviewer's perception of the **suspect's motive,** and the way interviewers are inclined to give meaning to their mistakes may influence the aforementioned relationship. In this research we wanted to minimise the probability of demand characteristics, in other words, that you would (unconsciously) react in ways you think favorable for the research. But, which are not your intuitive reactions. Therefore, the interview was manipulated in two ways without informing you.

Firstly, in advance we have provided you with information on the lost object that may have caused the leak. Before the interview we have instructed the suspect, who was part of the research team, to respond to hearing you bring up that object differently depending on the participant group you were assigned to. Either the suspect was supposed to act as if the USB stick was indeed the object that was missing. If that were the case the suspect should have just continued the conversation, in this case you will not have noticed anything. If you were in the incorrect object participant group, then the suspect was instructed to respond somewhat offended and surprised whilst commenting that not a USB stick was lost, but a tablet. This allowed us to observe how you did (or did not) react to making a communication error.

Secondly, we have manipulated your presumed motives (what you considered the suspect's motive for his or her deeds) by providing you with one of two possible texts. Either you were informed that the suspect was guilty to the offence of leaking company information and did so purposefully. Or you were also informed that the suspect was indeed guilty, but that he or she had accidentally leaked the company information. We wanted to find out whether manipulating someone's presumed motives would affect the way they reacted to making communicational errors.

As you were not informed about these manipulations beforehand you have not been able to give a full consent to participate in this research, we hope this information has provided you with a clear view of our study. If you have any questions left about your participation, feel free to ask them now in the Teams call or to reach out to us at a later moment. We find it important that you can make a full informed decision on your participation, this means you are also still free to revoke the use of your data within one week after participation. If you wish to do so feel free to let us know. Otherwise, all of us thank you for your participation and wish you a wonderful day!

Appendix F

Suspect Gender Effects

To ensure that the gender of the researcher who played the suspect did not influence the interviewers behavioural and emotional responses, it was decided to test for effects of the suspect gender on the interviewers' response strategies after the factual error and their experience of guilt (Chapman et al., 2018). To analyse the impact of suspect gender on guilt, suspect gender was added to the general linear model that was used to assess hypothesis one to four as, an independent variable. The data showed a non-significant interaction between the suspect's gender and the interviewers experience of guilt, $F(1,104) = .08$, $p = .78$, $\eta_p^2 = .00$. Therefore, no effect of this independent variable on guilt was detected.

Next, to test for the impact of suspect gender on response strategies, a multinomial logistic regression was conducted. The model included suspect gender as an independent variable and the response strategies (including contradict) as a dependent variable, while the response of deflect was set as the reference category. The results indicated a non-significant effect of suspect gender on the exploration ($B = 1.05$, $SE = .87$, $p = .23$) and contradict response strategy ($B = 1.24$, $SE = .75$, $p = .09$). Therefore, it is indicated that the suspect's gender did not affect the interviewers' response strategies.