


RESEARCH ARTICLE

Transfer of Rapport in a Simulated Investigative Interview

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ABSTRACT

Recent research into effective investigative interviewing practice has focused on the benefits of interviewer-interviewee rapport to successful outcomes. However, little research has addressed whether rapport developed between the interviewee and other law enforcement interactants can be transferred to the interviewer-interviewee relationship. In the current study, 121 college students participated in an interview about their participation in potentially embarrassing illegal or unethical behaviours after having interacted with an experimenter. Participants were randomly assigned to either a rapport-building experimenter or a neutral experimenter and to either a rapport-building interviewer or a neutral interviewer. Although interaction with a rapport-building experimenter did not directly increase perceptions of rapport with the interviewer, across interviewer rapport-building conditions, it did indirectly affect perceptions of rapport with the interviewer, through perceptions of rapport with the experimenter. Additionally, perceptions of rapport with a rapport-building interviewer were higher when the experimenter also tried to build rapport. Perceptions of rapport with the experimenter were greater when the interviewer built rapport. These results have implications for strategic use of rapport-building behaviours among multiple interviewees and for officers who have initial contact with potential interviewees.

In the past decade, the role of rapport in investigative and intelligence interviews has attracted widespread attention among scholars and practitioners (Kelly, Redlich and Miller 2015; Vallano et al. 2015; Walsh and Bull 2012). Interest has been stimulated by policy developments in the United States and the United Kingdom, where physically coercive intelligence interviewing methods have been banned (National Defense Authorization Act 2016; Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984).

One aspect of rapport that has not been sufficiently addressed by research is the extent to which it can be transferred from one person to another (Abbe and Brandon 2013). This is particularly important in policing contexts, as interviewees often encounter many individuals prior to being interviewed. For example, suspects may be questioned by responding officers or, if arrested, processed by officers who take their photograph, record

their fingerprints, and conduct body searches. How these individuals treat suspects may impact their experience of rapport with the person conducting the interview. Additionally, interviews are often conducted by more than one interviewer and sometimes the interviewer changes between interviews. This project will address the research question, 'Does a suspect's experience of rapport during their initial encounter with the police affect their experience of rapport with an interviewer and, subsequently, their cooperation during the interview?'.

1 | Rapport-Building Behaviours and the Experience of Rapport

The extant research conducted on rapport-based interviewing has found that rapport building can influence interviewee