

Exploring the strategies for release of forensic evidence during police interviews with suspects

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Much of the investigative interviewing literature has focused on interview strategies which increase the likelihood of successfully detecting deception, with less research focusing on the strategic use of specific types of information during a suspect interview. Recent research (Dando & Bull, 2011) suggests that the strategic release of information during a suspect interview can improve the interviewer's ability to detect deception, while simultaneously making it cognitively more difficult for the interviewee to maintain a deceptive story. This paper looks specifically at the use of forensic science evidence in police interviews, which follows on from a study by Bond (2007) which demonstrated that the most important predictor of successful prosecution in cases where forensic evidence was recovered was the skill of the police interviewer. The paper will present preliminary findings from a survey of police interviewers about their experience using forensic evidence in interviews and their understanding of the probative value of different types of forensic evidence. This exploratory research will form the basis for a longer term research project, with an objective to improve current police interview practice by contributing to the training of interviewing police officers.

Biography

Lisa Smith completed her PhD in Psychology at the University of Leicester, and is now a Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Leicester. Her research interests include the use of forensic science in the Criminal Justice System, and in particular comprehension of forensic science evidence by laypersons (e.g. jurors) and professionals (e.g. police investigators). She is also co-Director of the Alec Jeffreys Forensic Science Institute, at the University of Leicester, and a Professional Member of the Forensic Science Society.

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