Appendix 3: The collection of evidence (Cognitive)

Key research: Memon and Higham (1999) A review of the cognitive interview

Review article
• A critique of the Cognitive Interview (CI) covering four themes:
  1) How effective each of the components of the CI are
  2) Comparison with other interview methods (Guided Interview, Standard Police Interview, Structured Interview)
  3) How to measure memory performance
  4) How training quality influences interviewer performance.

Effectiveness of the components of the CI
• Four key components:
  1) Witness mentally reconstructs the event – Context Reinstatement
  2) Witness is asked to report everything
  3) Recall is encouraged from a variety of perspectives
  4) Retrieval is attempted from different starting points.

• Methodological problems with isolating the effective components of the interview. Research suggests that context reinstatement is the most effective component.

• Enhanced Cognitive Interview (ECI) emphasizes effective communication between interviewer and witness (e.g. active listening, open questions). Effectiveness of the CI is seen to be an interplay between the context reinstatement and the improved communication techniques. Mental imagery is also an adapted feature of the CI in aiding retrieval.

Comparison with other interview methods
• Problems with obtaining control groups – the Standard Police Interview is variable between interviewers and non-standardised.

• The Guided Memory Interview (GMI) doesn’t ask as many probing questions as the CI and is affected by interviewer variables but is a better comparison due to similar features to the CI.

• The Structured Interview (SI) is also similar to the CI in terms of effective interviewer skills and questioning but does not employ the cognitive technique.

• Both GMI and SI are better control groups than the Standard Police Interview.

Measuring memory performance
• This in effect is the DV in the research – how memory is measured. A lot of the research is laboratory-based. The most common measure is % of interview statements that are correct/incorrect. The research ignores the amount/nature of the reported information. It doesn't allow for an effective measure of how memory operates.

• Recent strategies focused on establishing whether the participants ‘know/remember’ whether a series of events occurred.

• Studies also looked at the relationship between confidence and accuracy but again based on experimental research.

Quality of training
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- Early studies did not specify amount and quality of training.
- ECI places cognitive demands (e.g. memory questioning) on the interviewer – more than structured interviews. Therefore quality and quantity of training are key to its effectiveness as a method for interviewing witnesses.
- Individual differences of interviewers are key, e.g. attitudes, motivation, prior experience of the interviewers.
- Some police officers show resistance to being trained but this can depend on who is doing the training.
- Limited research into taking baseline measures e.g. interviewing skills pre-training. This is a methodological issue.
- Feedback on interviewer performance post-training is important to enhance performance.
- In summary, training needs to focus on: length of training, quality of training, background of the interviewers and their attitudes towards training.