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Encouraging eyewitnesses to falsely corroborate allegations: Effects of rapport-building and incriminating evidence

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Encouraging eyewitnesses to falsely corroborate allegations: Effects of rapport-building and incriminating evidence

Building rapport involves developing a harmonious relationship with another person, and conveying understanding and acceptance towards that person. Law enforcement officers use rapport-building to help gather information from witnesses. But could rapport-building, in some situations, work to contaminate eyewitness testimony? Research shows that compelling incriminating evidence can lead people to corroborate false accusations made against another person. We investigated whether rapport-building—when combined with either Verbal or Verbal+Visual false evidence—might boost these corroboration rates. Subjects took part in a pseudo-gambling task, in which their counterpart was falsely accused of cheating. Using a 2 (Rapport: Rapport vs. No-rapport) x 2 (Incriminating Evidence: Verbal vs. Verbal+Visual) between-subjects design, we persuaded subjects to corroborate the accusation. We found that both rapport and verbal+visual incriminating evidence increased the compliance rate. Even when the incriminating evidence was only presented verbally, rapport-building subjects were almost three times as likely to corroborate a false accusation compared to subjects who did not undergo rapport-building. Our results suggest that although there is widespread and strong support for using rapport-building in interviews, doing so also has the potential to aggravate the contaminating power of suggestive interview techniques.

Keywords: Rapport, false evidence, false accusations, eyewitness, compliance

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2
3 'If you wish to win a man over to your ideas,' said Abraham Lincoln, the 16th US President,
4
5 'first make him your friend.' Lincoln was right, of course—people are more likely to open-up
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7 to and to be persuaded by someone who is amicable rather than aloof—something that
8
9 professionals in the criminal justice domain know well. Leading guidelines on best-practice
10
11 interviewing (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992; Technical Working Group on Eyewitness Evidence,
12
13 1999), and prominent policing manuals (Centre for Investigative Skills, 2004; Inbau, Reid,
14
15 Buckley, & Jayne, 2005) suggest that interviewers should build rapport with interviewees to
16
17 promote the accuracy and completeness of memory reports. Yet we wondered whether
18
19 rapport-building might have the potential to be coercive when used in conjunction with
20
21 suggestive interviewing techniques. To answer this question, we developed an experimental
22
23 method to test the effects of building rapport with, and presenting incriminating evidence to,
24
25 potential witnesses of a prohibited act.
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30 What defines 'rapport' and how is it built? Rapport is a complex construct involving
31
32 many components and behaviours, but at its most basic level, rapport-building entails
33
34 establishing a harmonious relationship with another person (Newberry & Stubbs, 1990).
35
36 Some definitions of rapport include an element of equality and openness (Shepherd & Milne,
37
38 2006). The interviewer is encouraged to treat the interviewee as an equal, and to convey
39
40 respect by openly sharing the joint task ahead. Rapport may also require actively listening to
41
42 the other person while conveying sympathy, understanding, acceptance and interest (Bryant,
43
44 2006; Cherryman & Bull, 2000; Home Office, 2002; Powell, Fisher, & Wright, 2005).
45
46 However, in some police training manuals, definitions of rapport emphasise its persuasive
47
48 impact and how rapport-building can ultimately induce people to conform and to provide
49
50 information (Inbau et al., 2005).
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55 Investigators routinely use rapport-building techniques when interviewing people,
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57 particularly witnesses and victims who fear the consequences of providing information
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3 (Clarke, Milne, & Bull, 2011; Oxburgh & Ost, 2011; Walsh & Milne, 2008). Rapport-
4
5 building is considered important—most prominent investigative interview protocols have
6
7 discrete rapport-training phases (Powell et al., 2005). For instance rapport-building forms part
8
9 of the Cognitive Interview (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992), which in turn forms part of the UK
10
11 PEACE ethical interviewing framework (for reviews, see Abbe & Brandon, 2013; Milne,
12
13 Shaw, & Bull, 2007). In one British survey, police officers rated rapport-building as both
14
15 their most effective and frequently used interviewing tool (Dando, Wilcock, & Milne, 2008).
16
17 This view was also shared by a sample of US police investigators, who self-reported almost
18
19 always establishing rapport in interrogations (Kassin et al., 2007). Both the police and
20
21 psychologists believe that rapport encourages full and honest accounts of events from
22
23 witnesses (Centre for Investigative Skills, 2004; Milne et al., 2007). Indeed, scientific
24
25 research supports this premise: rapport-building can boost both the quality and quantity of
26
27 detail in eyewitnesses' reports (Collins, Lincoln, & Frank, 2002; Vallano & Schreiber
28
29 Compo, 2011).
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34 Thus rapport-building appears to be a useful and popular interviewing tool used by
35
36 law enforcement officials to gather information. But what happens when rapport is used
37
38 alongside suggestive influences in a forensic context? Suggestive factors such as giving
39
40 feedback about performance as a witness, and the use of leading questions during interviews,
41
42 can influence the quality and quantity of detail in witnesses' reports (e.g., Loftus & Palmer,
43
44 1974; Roper & Shewan, 2002). Whereas best-practice interview protocols such as PEACE
45
46 advise explicitly against the use of such suggestive methods, field data indicate that
47
48 investigators struggle to avoid suggestive questioning (Clarke et al., 2011). More recently
49
50 studies have shown that simply demonstrating the existence of incriminating evidence against
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52 a guilty or innocent suspect can corrupt witnesses' testimony—and potentially memory—for
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54 both people and events. For instance, when Hasel and Kassin (2009) asked people to identify
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3 a target in a lineup, over 50% changed their original identification decision after being told
4 that specific line-up members had confessed or denied their guilt. More recently, Kukucka
5 and Kassin (2014) showed that people's judgements about handwriting evidence in a mock-
6 case were influenced by whether or not the suspect had confessed. Thus, different pieces of
7 evidence can 'taint' each other and are not necessarily treated independently by witnesses, a
8 phenomenon that Kassin (2012) has termed *corroboration inflation*. Other studies have
9 shown that people will readily 'snitch' on an innocent person when they are presented with
10 compelling yet false evidence that the person committed a prohibited or objectionable act
11 (Kaasa, Cauffman, Clarke-Stewart, & Loftus, 2013; Newring & O'Donohue, 2008; Swanner,
12 Beike, & Cole, 2010; Wade, Green, & Nash, 2010). Together this research reveals that when
13 eyewitnesses are aware of incriminating evidence against a suspect—whether that evidence is
14 genuine or is fabricated—their testimonies can be contaminated in important and systematic
15 ways. Archival evidence shows that erroneous eyewitness testimony has played a significant
16 role in documented wrongful convictions of innocent suspects (see Garrett, 2011; Kassin,
17 Bogart, & Kerner, 2012). However, no study to date has examined the combined effect of
18 rapport and suggestive interview techniques on eyewitness testimony.

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21 In the current research, we asked whether basic rapport-building has the potential to
22 encourage witnesses to improperly corroborate accusations when it is used alongside
23 suggestive interview techniques. There are good reasons to believe that rapport-building
24 might go from being an effective and powerful tool to being coercive when combined with a
25 suggestive interview. We already know that rapport-building can be used to persuade people
26 to comply with requests they might not otherwise consider. Subordinates, for instance, are
27 more likely to comply with supervisors who use rapport (Heintzman, Leathers, Parrott, &
28 Cairns, 1993), and families are more likely to consent to organ donation when the tissue
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3 requester is empathetic and discloses personal information (Siminoff, Traino, & Gordon,
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5 2011).

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7 Research grounded in the *Yale Attitude Change Approach* (e.g., Hovland, Janis, &
8
9 Kelley, 1954) can help us to understand why building rapport can be so persuasive.
10
11 According to this classic social psychological approach, the persuasiveness of a message
12
13 depends on factors relating to the source and the nature of the communication, as well as the
14
15 nature of the audience. Rapport-building might be persuasive because it influences people's
16
17 perceptions of the source, specifically by making the messenger appear more credible. People
18
19 are thought to judge the credibility of a source based on two basic dimensions:
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21 trustworthiness and expertise (e.g., O'Keefe, 2002). In a forensic setting, an interviewer who
22
23 builds rapport might appear knowledgeable, sincere and trustworthy—and thus highly
24
25 credible—persuading a witness to accept their version of events and to provide erroneous
26
27 testimony. Indeed, people are more likely to accept misleading information when that
28
29 information is presented by someone who is perceived to be a credible source (e.g.,
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31 Lampinen & Smith, 1995; Smith & Ellsworth, 1987; Vornik, Sharman, & Garry, 2003). For
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33 example, people are more likely to be misled about the details of an accident by an innocent
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35 bystander—someone who presumably has no motive to lie—than by a participant in the
36
37 accident itself (Dodd & Bradshaw, 1980).

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39 This power of the interviewer's perceived credibility might also interact with the
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41 strength or credibility of the incriminating evidence that the interviewer presents. In general,
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43 when messages are corroborated by evidence and when conjecture about what happened is
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45 minimised, those messages become more plausible and appear more certain (Connell &
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47 Keane, 2006). Indeed, when people actually view incriminating evidence—such as a doctored
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49 video-recording—for themselves, they are more likely to provide false testimony than when
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51 the evidence is simply described (e.g., Nash & Wade, 2009), and we know that false visual
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3 evidence is persuasive because people tend to believe it is highly credible (Nash, Wade, &
4 Brewer, 2009). Together, factors relating to the credibility of the messenger and of the
5 message itself comprise *source validity* (Lombardi, Sinatra, & Nussbaum, 2013). Perceptions
6 of source validity can have wide-ranging implications and can influence our plausibility
7 judgments on messages about many topics, even controversial topics such as climate change
8 (Lombardi, Seyranian, & Sinatra, 2014). If rapport-building increases source validity, then an
9 interviewer who builds rapport with a witness might be more persuasive (and perhaps
10 therefore more coercive) in situations where source validity is otherwise relatively low, such
11 as when the incriminating evidence against a suspect is only verbally described. However,
12 when source validity is already high, for instance, if there is visual incriminating evidence
13 against the suspect, then the power of rapport-building to persuade a witness might be
14 smaller.
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30 The studies reviewed above lead us to clear predictions about the effects of rapport in
31 the context of suggestive interview tactics. However, other studies in the eyewitness literature
32 suggest that rapport-building might in fact guard witnesses against suggestive influences.
33 Friendly and supportive interviewers can, in some circumstances, protect the accuracy of
34 witnesses' reports. Simply asking witnesses a few friendly questions prior to their interview
35 can reduce their susceptibility to misinformation (Vallano & Schreiber Compo, 2011).
36 Moreover, when interviewers are perceived to be friendly rather than firm, witnesses are less
37 inclined to change their answers to questions (Baxter, Boon, & Marley, 2006). Baxter et al.
38 suggest that unfriendly interviewers may induce feelings of anxiety and uncertainty in
39 witnesses; as such, witnesses are more likely to attend to—and be influenced by—external
40 cues. According to this reasoning, by focussing on the external cues, witnesses are less likely
41 to notice discrepancies between these cues and their own memories. In turn, because they
42 have not detected these discrepancies, the witnesses have no reason to scrutinise or disbelieve
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3 the misinformation, and thus are more likely to erroneously recollect the event (Tousignant,
4 Hall, & Loftus, 1986). Thus, these studies suggest that rapport-building may reduce the
5 likelihood of witnesses providing false testimony in response to suggestive influence.
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10 To examine whether combining rapport-building with a suggestive interview
11 procedure would foster or reduce false eyewitness testimony, we adapted Wade et al.'s
12 (2010) gambling procedure. Wade et al.'s procedure did not include a rapport component, but
13 in the current experiment, the experimenter either did or did not briefly build basic rapport
14 with subjects before the subject completed an online gambling task alongside a confederate.
15
16 Subjects were later falsely informed that the confederate had cheated on the gambling task.
17
18 Some subjects were simply told that video evidence of the cheating existed (verbal evidence),
19 whereas other subjects were also shown a doctored video-recording that actually depicted the
20 purported cheating (verbal+visual evidence). Finally, subjects were asked to sign a statement
21 to say they had witnessed the cheating take place. Thus subjects were encouraged by either a
22 friendly or unfriendly experimenter to improperly corroborate an accusation, when provided
23 with either verbal or both verbal and visual evidence of the 'offense'. If rapport-building has
24 coercive potential, subjects should be more likely to corroborate an accusation made by a
25 friendly experimenter, and thus there should be an increase in the number of subjects who
26 sign the false witness statement when rapport is used. However, if rapport-building has a
27 protective effect, then subjects should be less likely to corroborate an accusation made by a
28 friendly experimenter; that is, fewer subjects should sign the false witness statement.
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47 **Method**

48 *Subjects*

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50 Seventy-two students and staff, aged between 18 and 56 years ($M = 22.0$ years, $SD = 5.6$,
51 52% female), were recruited from the University of Warwick campus and participated
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3 individually for £6. We randomly assigned subjects to the cells of a 2 (Rapport: Rapport vs.
4 No-rapport) x 2 (Incriminating evidence: Verbal vs. Verbal+Visual) between-subjects design.

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6
7 *Materials and Procedure*

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9 We obtained ethical approval from Warwick University's Humanities and Social
10 Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Subjects took part in two sessions within one day.
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12 Session 1 was always in the morning and session 2 in the afternoon, which gave the
13
14 experimenter time between the sessions to prepare the personalised materials for session 2.
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18 *Session 1.* Subjects arrived at the laboratory for their first session, which lasted
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20 approximately 25 mins. As the computer rebooted, the experimenter engaged in friendly
21
22 conversation with *Rapport* subjects, using open and relaxed body-language and asking
23
24 icebreaking questions such as 'How was your journey?' and 'Whereabouts are you from?' A
25
26 semi-structured interview approach was used with a set of 14 baseline questions. The
27
28 experimenter also engaged in the usual turn-taking and reciprocity rules of conversation, with
29
30 some self-disclosure. The experimenter conveyed interest in the conversation and provided
31
32 sympathetic and understanding responses when appropriate. The imprecise and complex
33
34 definition of rapport makes it very difficult to manipulate experimentally; however, this basic
35
36 manipulation of rapport-building was used after consultation with police officers, and
37
38 because 'small talk' forms a commonly cited element of investigative rapport-building
39
40 (Bryant, 2006; Inbau et al., 2005). For *No-rapport* subjects, the experimenter acted in a
41
42 detached and unfriendly manner and did not engage in conversation. If subjects attempted to
43
44 talk to the experimenter, she turned away and responded to questions with disinterested,
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46 monosyllabic responses.
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52 After approximately 5 mins in both Rapport and No-rapport conditions, subjects were
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54 led into an adjoining room and seated next to Confederate A, who was posing as another
55
56 subject. Subjects were told that they were taking part in a gambling experiment. Each subject
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3 had a pile of fake money and there was a shared 'bank' positioned between them. The aim
4
5 was to win as much money as possible by independently placing bets on 15 multiple-choice
6
7 trivia questions, presented sequentially on the monitors in front of them. We falsely told
8
9 subjects that the person who accrued the largest profit out of the entire subject sample would
10
11 win a cash prize. Subjects were filmed throughout the task.
12

13
14 Each multiple-choice question had four possible answers with associated odds-ratios
15
16 (see Figure 1 in Nash & Wade, 2009, p. 627). After selecting an answer, the subject typed the
17
18 amount they wished to bet. If their answer was correct, a large green checkmark appeared on
19
20 the computer screen with an instruction to take their winnings from the 'bank'. If the answer
21
22 was incorrect, a large red cross appeared with an instruction to return money from their
23
24 personal pile to the bank. Confederate A was instructed to always take and return the money
25
26 appropriately and answered approximately half of the questions correctly. Both Confederate
27
28 A and the experimenter were blind to the incriminating evidence condition (described
29
30 shortly) during this session.
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34 Subjects were then asked to complete and post an anonymous 'departmental
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36 evaluation form' in a box before leaving, which served to help us ensure the rapport
37
38 manipulation was successful. It contained five questions with 5-point response scales (1= not
39
40 at all; 5= very). Two items were critical: 'How friendly was the experimenter?' and 'How
41
42 approachable was the experimenter?' To maximize the strength of the manipulation, subjects
43
44 whose average response for these two questions was <3.5 in the Rapport conditions, or >2.5
45
46 in the No-rapport conditions were debriefed immediately in Session 2 instead of participating
47
48 further. These participants were excluded and subsequently replaced as the study progressed.¹
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52 Between Sessions 1 and 2, the experimenter learned whether the subject was in a
53
54 *Verbal-evidence* or a *Verbal+Visual-evidence* condition. For Verbal+Visual-evidence
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56
57 ¹ There were 21 such subjects. All but one were No-rapport subjects.
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3 subjects, she created a personalised doctored video-clip. A section of video lasting
4
5 approximately 30 sec was extracted from the recording, showing Confederate A appropriately
6
7 taking money from the bank after answering a question correctly. We used video-editing
8
9 software to digitally replace the green checkmark on the confederate's computer screen with
10
11 a red cross. The clip therefore appeared to show the confederate inappropriately taking
12
13 money from the bank after having answered a question incorrectly (Figure 1).
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16 *Session 2.* Subjects returned approximately 4 hours later, expecting to complete
17
18 another gambling task. Instead, the experimenter explained that Confederate A had cheated in
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20 Session 1. The experimenter was always the first author, to minimise any between-
21
22 experimenter effects. She carefully followed an interview protocol throughout and
23
24 maintained the rapport manipulation by continuing to be friendly and engaged with Rapport
25
26 subjects, and to be unfriendly and disengaged with No-rapport subjects. She explained that
27
28 the money in Confederate A's personal pile amounted to more than the computer records
29
30 stated. To provide later justification for taking action against the confederate, the
31
32 experimenter also told subjects that the confederate had behaved improperly in other
33
34 experiments. The experimenter added that the video showed their peer cheating on one
35
36 occasion; but that this occasion did not account for the large discrepancy, and that the peer
37
38 had repeatedly obscured the camera's view. This verbal allusion to video-evidence
39
40 constituted the only evidence against the confederate in the Verbal-evidence conditions;
41
42 subjects in the Verbal+Visual-evidence conditions were then also shown the doctored video-
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44 clip to bolster the claim. This incriminating evidence manipulation was based on a previous
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46 study in which subjects were three times more likely to falsely accuse a confederate-subject
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48 of cheating on a task when they were shown doctored video evidence, as opposed to simply
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50 being told that the evidence existed (Wade et al., 2010).
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3 The experimenter explained that the psychology department wished to take
4 disciplinary action against the student (i.e., Confederate A) to prevent them from cheating in
5 future experiments. This action would also enable the experimenter to claim reimbursement
6 for the money spent paying that day's subjects, whose data could no longer be used. The
7 experimenter asked the subject whether she or he saw anything suspicious in Session 1, and
8 whether they would be willing to sign a witness statement to confirm having seen the
9 confederate cheat. Subjects were then shown the statement, which was handwritten on an
10 official-looking *pro forma* headed 'Disciplinary Incident Report Form'. The first part
11 described the allegation:
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22 Student suspected to have knowingly cheated in an experiment
23 with an incentive prize fund. On at least one occasion the subject
24 was seen taking 'money' from the bank in this experiment
25 inappropriately. We have reason to believe that this was a
26 deliberate act.
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34 Below was a printed section indicating where the subject should sign to confirm [a] that they
35 had witnessed the act and [b] that they understood their corroboration would result in
36 disciplinary action being taken. All subjects were told only to sign to say that they had
37 actually seen the cheating for themselves during Session 1. The experimenter emphasized
38 that it was entirely up to the subject to decide whether to sign; subjects were prompted for a
39 second and final time if they were initially resistant to sign.
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48 All subjects were then asked to wait in an adjoining room whilst the experimenter
49 apparently spoke with her supervisor. Confederate B was waiting in the room, posing as
50 another subject. Confederate B initiated a conversation with the subject as a means to assess
51 whether they actually believed they saw Confederate A cheat (as per Kassin & Kiechel,
52 1996). If subjects were resistant to discussing what happened, Confederate B encouraged
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3 them to discuss what happened by claiming to have overheard some of the experimenter's
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5 accusation. These conversations were covertly audio-recorded, and all subjects gave consent
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7 during debriefing for these recordings to be inspected and transcribed. Subjects appeared
8
9 convinced by the cover story and frequently expressed surprise during debriefing (e.g., 'I
10
11 really thought that the girl next to me was cheating!'). Eight subjects indicated suspicion
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13 about the study to the experimenter or Confederate B and were subsequently excluded and
14
15 replaced as the study progressed.
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18 **Results & Discussion**

19
20 Did rapport-building have a protective or a coercive effect on witness testimony
21
22 when used alongside false incriminating evidence? Figure 2 shows the percentage of subjects
23
24 who signed the witness statement as a function of incriminating evidence and rapport
25
26 condition. Subjects, in general, were quite willing to corroborate the false accusation: 36%
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28 signed the witness statement after just one prompt to do so. After this first prompt, the
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30 corroboration rate differed across conditions, $\chi^2(3, N= 72)= 9.87, p= .02, V= .37$.
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33
34 A three-way loglinear analysis revealed a significant Rapport x Evidence type x
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36 Compliance interaction, $\chi^2(1)= 4.01, p< .05$. As the darker parts of the bars in Figure 2
37
38 illustrate, when rapport-building was combined with visual incriminating evidence, there was
39
40 little more compliance than when either of the techniques were used separately. Indeed,
41
42 follow-up analyses using separate chi-square tests showed that whereas rapport-building
43
44 significantly increased the compliance rate among Verbal-evidence subjects, $\chi^2(1)= 7.26, p<$
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46 $.01$, the same was not true for Verbal+Visual-evidence subjects, $\chi^2(1)= 0.11, p= .74, OR =$
47
48 1.25 . The odds ratios for these chi-square tests showed that the odds of Verbal-evidence
49
50 subjects complying was 13.60 times higher following rapport-building, whereas the odds of
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52 Verbal+Visual-evidence subjects complying were only slightly increased following rapport-
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54 building (1.25). Alongside the three-way interaction that emerged from the main loglinear
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3 analysis, the effects on compliance of rapport-building, $\chi^2(1)= 3.85, p< .05$, and evidence
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5 type, $\chi^2(1)= 3.85, p< .05$, were both significant overall. The odds ratios here show that each
6
7 of our experimental manipulations independently increased the odds of subjects complying
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9 almost threefold (both *ORs* = 2.68).

10
11 After the second prompt, an additional 17% of subjects signed the witness
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13 statement, making 53% in total. Following this additional prompt, the total corroboration rate
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15 still differed across conditions, $\chi^2(3, N= 72)= 11.37, p= .01, V= .40$, however a new three-
16
17 way loglinear analysis revealed that the Rapport x Evidence type x Compliance interaction
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19 was no longer significant, $\chi^2(1)= 0.18, p= .67$. Backwards elimination of this three-way
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21 interaction term from the loglinear model nevertheless showed that the significant effects on
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23 compliance of both rapport, $\chi^2(1)= 5.65, p= .02$, and of evidence type, $\chi^2(1)= 5.65, p= .02$
24
25 remained. Again, the odds ratios show that each experimental manipulation independently
26
27 increased the odds of complying more than threefold (both *ORs* = 3.14).

28
29 There are three particularly interesting results to note. First, the overall compliance
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31 rate of 53% is much higher than the 28% found in Wade et al.'s (2010) study, driven
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33 primarily by the high rates in our Rapport conditions. Indeed, our results show that when
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35 there was only verbal evidence, rapport more than doubled the percentage rate of false
36
37 accusations in comparison to no rapport. Second, this effect of adding rapport was
38
39 comparable in size to the effect of adding visual incriminating evidence to the verbal claim.
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41 Third, after one initial prompt to comply (but not after both prompts), rapport-building and
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43 visual incriminating evidence in combination had little more coercive influence than if one or
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45 the other technique was used alone.

46
47 A judge who was blind to subjects' conditions and the experimental hypotheses coded
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49 transcripts of subjects' conversations with Confederate B for confabulation. Most subjects
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51 (93%) discussed the event; the remaining 7% of subjects who did not discuss the event were
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3 still included in analyses, but—to be conservative—they were coded as showing no evidence
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5 of confabulation. Subjects were classified as confabulating if they made up details about how
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7 the confederate potentially cheated (e.g., one subject said ‘I noticed out of the corner of my
8
9 eye them kind of scooping up a lot of money’). Of the 38 who signed the statement, seven
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11 (18%) were judged to have confabulated potentially incriminating details about how their
12
13 partner cheated. However, this confabulation occurred in all four of the experiment’s
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15 conditions.
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18 We propose that rapport-building might have promoted compliance in this study
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20 because it enhanced people’s perceptions of source validity (Lombardi et al., 2013),
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22 achieving persuasive power through the 'source' route mentioned in the Yale Attitude Change
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24 Approach (Hovland et al., 1954). Specifically, it is possible that rapport-building boosted
25
26 subjects’ compliance by increasing their perceptions of the experimenter as being trustworthy
27
28 and thus, credible. Our data offer some tentative support for this interpretation, namely the
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30 finding that after just one request to comply, the effects of rapport-building and visual
31
32 incriminating evidence were largely redundant with each other when combined. This finding
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34 is consistent with the idea that rapport-building and visual evidence promoted compliance via
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36 a similar mechanism, and we know from prior research that source credibility is responsible
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38 for much of the persuasive power of false visual evidence (Nash et al., 2009). We should
39
40 nevertheless be cautious in accepting this interpretation of the data, not least because the
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42 significant interaction between the two techniques disappeared following a second request to
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44 comply. Further research is required to directly test the exact mechanisms involved, yet a
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46 clear message from the current study is that rapport-building could potentially foster
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48 erroneous testimony from eyewitnesses, rather than prevent it, when used alongside
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50 suggestive interview procedures.
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3 To our knowledge, this was the first study to test the effects of building rapport
4 alongside coercive investigative techniques, and thus we did not set out to test interviewer
5 effects. Future research could use interviewers with varying attributes or personality
6 characteristics to shed further light on the impact of the 'source'. For instance, messages from
7 a physically attractive source are perceived to be more persuasive than those from a less
8 attractive source (Baker & Gilbert, 1977) but only if the persuasive message is explicit
9 (Reinhard, Messner, & Sporer, 2006). Future experiments could also include a neutral or
10 baseline condition in which the experimenter is neither friendly nor unfriendly. A previous
11 study testing the effects of rapport-building on information gathered at interview showed that
12 a neutral condition yielded similar results to an 'abrupt' condition (Collins et al., 2002). This
13 finding suggests that there is something unique about rapport that makes it so persuasive.
14 However, a neutral condition is yet to be tested alongside coercive interrogation techniques,
15 which could further our understanding of how rapport interacts with other factors at
16 interview. For instance, an 'abrupt' approach might be highly persuasive when combined
17 with a direct coercive interrogation technique, such as an explicit deal or offer of leniency if
18 the witness provides corroborative testimony.

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21 It appears that rapport does not always offer individuals the freedom to carefully
22 evaluate external cues in order to reject suggestions, as Baxter et al.'s (2006) and Vallano and
23 Schreiber Compo's (2011) findings suggest. One key difference between methodologies,
24 however, is that our subjects would have clearly felt they were helping the interviewer by
25 implicating the confederate, whereas in prior studies the interviewers were not 'helped' when
26 subjects gave particular answers (see Roper & Shewan, 2002). This methodological
27 difference may be important; if witnesses believe they can assist an investigation by offering
28 particular details, then rapport should play a role in the decision to do so. It is also possible
29 that the influence of rapport depends on whether the witness is exposed to a suggestion

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3 before the interview, as in Vallano and Schreiber Compo's study, or as a part of the interview
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5 as in the present study. Rapport might, for instance, specifically affect the likelihood of
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7 suggestions being accepted at the time they are presented, and so might have little coercive
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9 effect when the suggestions are given before rapport is built (for an exploration of the timing
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11 of rapport-building, see Kieckhafer, Vallano, & Schreiber Compo, 2014). Future research
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13 should examine to what extent the timing and interpersonal function of the suggestion matter.
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16 In practical terms, our findings represent new evidence of corroboration inflation,
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18 extending those findings of recent studies which show that witnesses provide more
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20 incriminating testimony when they know about other incriminating evidence (e.g., Hasel &
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22 Kassin, 2009; Kukucka & Kassin, 2014; Wade et al., 2010). Our data suggest that in some
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24 cases, building rapport with witnesses can have a similar effect. Importantly, these findings
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26 contrast with many justifications for using rapport in investigative interviewing. For instance,
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28 UK police guidelines state that 'people give more accurate information when they have trust
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30 in the professional relationship' (Centre for Investigative Skills, 2004). These statements
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32 might usually be true, but might be less so when deliberate or unintended suggestive
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34 influences are introduced. It is important to emphasise that whereas in the present study we
35
36 used false evidence to implicate an innocent person, the relevance of our findings is not
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38 limited to cases in which inaccurate evidence is used (wittingly or unwittingly), or where the
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40 suspect is factually innocent. Suppose for instance that a person were shown genuine CCTV
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42 evidence, which pictured her in a jewellery store unaware as a theft occurred behind her.
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44 Might this 'witness' be encouraged to testify against the perpetrator? If rapport-building can
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46 encourage a witness to corroborate incriminating evidence, such a corroboration of
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48 incriminating evidence would be dangerous and misleading even though the evidence is
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50 genuine and the suspect guilty.
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3 Our study investigated the effect of rapport, when combined with a suggestive
4 interview technique, on false accusations, but some limitations are worth noting. First, our
5 focus was on compliance, and not on the quality and quantity of the information that
6 witnesses recalled. Other studies suggest that rapport-building—when used in isolation—can
7 lead to an increase in accurate information and sometimes also a decrease in misinformation
8 being reported (Collins et al., 2002; Kieckhafer et al., 2014; Vallano & Schreiber Compo,
9 2011). Further research should investigate not only compliance rates, but the accuracy of
10 other crucial information reported when rapport is used with suggestive techniques. Second,
11 we induced rapport in our subjects by using rapport-building techniques similar to those
12 recommended by police. But the fact that our subjects met with the ‘interviewer’ prior to the
13 cheating incident (as in Wade et al., 2010)—and indeed that our rapport manipulation also
14 took place at this stage—is obviously unlike the sequencing of real-life police procedures,
15 and one consequence is that it is unclear whether rapport influenced subjects’ encoding of,
16 rather than only their retrieval of, the cheating event. Moreover, our measures of ‘friendliness’
17 and ‘approachability’ might not have covered the myriad elements of rapport-building.
18 Indeed, rapport is complex and multi-faceted, and includes a variety of verbal and non-verbal
19 components, such as tone of voice and body posture (e.g., Collins et al., 2002). A range of
20 factors are thought to affect the success of rapport-building techniques, from the placement of
21 physical barriers (Collins et al., 2002), to the degree of commonality between the individuals
22 (Newberry & Stubbs, 1990). Future research should examine which components of rapport-
23 building are particularly powerful, and whether some components but not others interact with
24 the power of suggestive techniques to foster their influence.

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52 To conclude, this study demonstrates that rapport-building has the potential to
53 contribute to the contamination of witness testimony. Whereas our results are consistent with
54 those of numerous studies on the effects of interpersonal dynamics on compliance (e.g.,
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3 Burger, Soroka, Gonzago, Murphy, & Somervell, 2001; Dolinski et al., 2001), few of those
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5 studies have involved subjects providing false information that would have important
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7 negative consequences for another person. Rapport-building undoubtedly reaps important
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9 rewards in police interviews and other contexts, and we do not challenge that this ethical
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11 interviewing approach should be considered the gold standard. Our findings do suggest,
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13 though, that to implement rapport in the most effective way, researchers and practitioners
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15 should be aware of conditions under which the coercive side of rapport is revealed.
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Figure 1. Process of doctoring the video. In the lower panel, Confederate A (left) appears to be inappropriately taking money from the shared bank, in the real subject's presence (right).

For Peer Review Only

Figure 2. Percentage of subjects who signed the witness statement in each of the four conditions after first and second prompts.

For Peer Review Only

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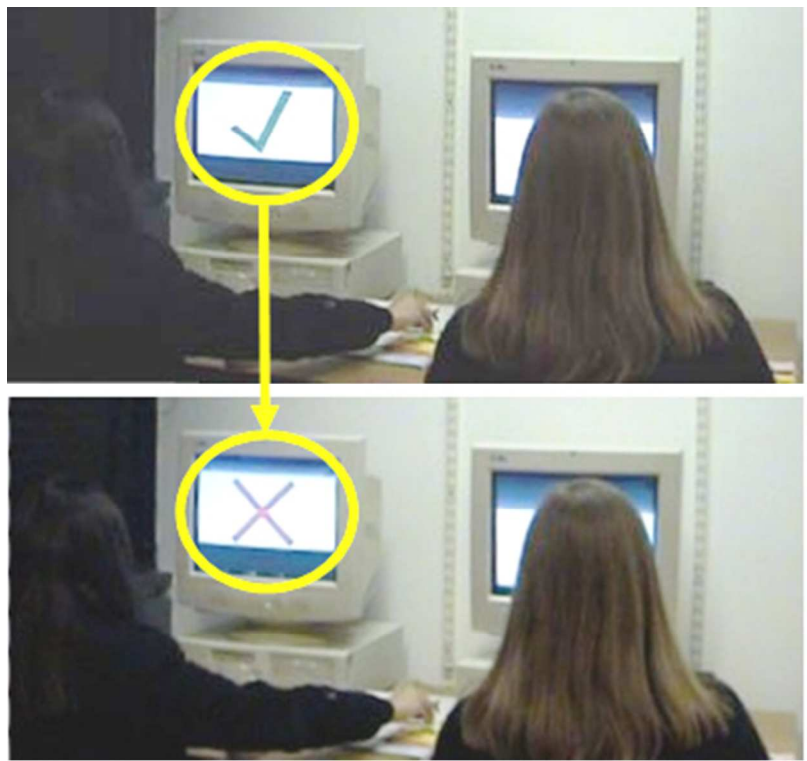


Figure 1. Process of doctored the video. In the lower panel, Confederate A (left) appears to be inappropriately taking money from the shared bank, in the real subject's presence (right).
105x99mm (96 x 96 DPI)

Preview Only

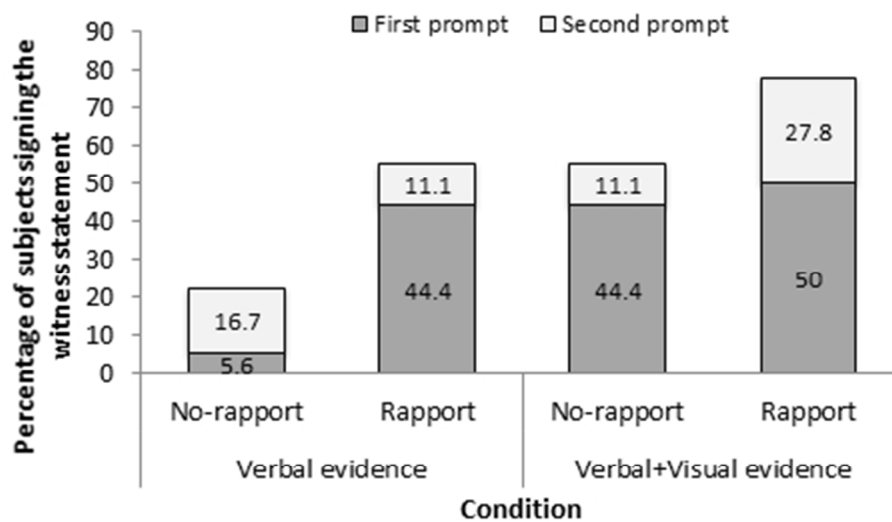


Figure 2. Percentage of subjects who signed the witness statement in each of the four conditions after first and second prompts.
127x76mm (96 x 96 DPI)