

A Pilot Study of Investigators' Suggestibility in the Investigative Interview: New Findings in Forensic Psychology

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Developing effective protocols to elicit accurate and reliable information is critical for the criminal investigative process. Effective criminal investigative work depends on gathering accurate statements from witnesses, victims and/or suspects of crime, without the interrogators influencing their responses and assumptions, as this can lead to erroneous conclusions. The purpose of this quasi-experimental field study was to determine the level to which subjects were sensitive to potentially suggestive questioning on the part of the investigators. The empirical part of the study was conducted in the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC), Glynco, Georgia, in 2017 and 2018. The sample consisted of 37 trainees, who were police officers from various USA security agencies. The Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale (GSS 1) was used to assess the level of suggestibility in the participants. We analyzed whether subjects are sensitive to possible suggestive questioning by investigators and whether negative feedback alters their original statements. The results showed better memory recall among police officers compared to the general population in the US and the UK (for which we had comparative data), but also a higher overall level of suggestibility.

Keywords: suggestibility, suggestibility of police officers, Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale

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