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**ADOPTING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BESPOKE  
INFORMANT INTERVIEW MODEL**

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**PhD**

**2022**

**ADOPTING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO  
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BESPOKE  
INFORMANT INTERVIEW MODEL**

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requirements of the University of Northumbria  
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## Abbreviations

The following abbreviations have been used throughout this thesis and although they have been defined at their first appearance within the text, they are also listed here for ease of reference:

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
CHIS	Covert Human Intelligence Source
CI	Cognitive Interview
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CoP	College of Policing
DA	Direct Approach
DSU	Dedicated Source Unit
EBP	Evidence Based Policing
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HIG	High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group
HUMINT	Human Source Intelligence
IDT	Interpersonal Deception Theory
IPCO	Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
NIM	National Intelligence Model
NPCC	National Police Chiefs Council
PACE	Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984
PEACE	Planning and preparation; Engage and explain; Account, clarify and challenge; Closure; Evaluate (see Chapter 2)
PoI	Person of Interest
RIPA	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, 2000
RWITS-US	Review and research; Welfare; Information; Tasking; Security; Understand context; Sharing (see Chapter 8)
SPP	Self-Presentation Perspective
SSA	Study Space Analysis (Chapter 5) or Smallest Space Analysis (Chapter 7)
ST	Scharff Technique
TA	Thematic Analysis
UK	United Kingdom
U.N.	United Nations
U.S.	United States of America

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## Articles and Submissions

- Appendix S: Moffett, Oxburgh, Dresser, Watson, & Gabbert (2021). Inside the shadows: a survey of UK human source intelligence (HUMINT) practitioners, examining their considerations when handling a covert human intelligence source (CHIS). *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*, DOI: 10.1080/13218719.2021.1926367
- Appendix T: Moffett, Oxburgh, Dresser, & Gabbert (2022). Mapping the Lie: A Smallest Space Analysis of Truthful and Deceptive Mock-informant Accounts. *The Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles*, DOI: 10.1177/0032258X221102271/
- Appendix U: Summary of Research Findings for Practitioner Dissemination.

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Finally, I would like to thank my family: my parents, for their continued support regardless of the direction I choose to take my life; my three children, who have grown up with their father constantly distracted by the calling of higher education; and of course, my wife, who has allowed me the time and space to indulge such a calling.

## **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this commentary has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted through the Researcher's submission to Northumbria University's Ethics Online System on 04/01/2021.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 74,480 words.

Name: L C Moffett

Signature:

Date:

## **Thesis Abstract**

The current thesis provides a unique contribution to research by presenting a bespoke informant interview model (RWITS-US). The model was developed by adopting a holistic approach to the conceptualisation of an informant interview. This involved defining the legal and operational context of an informant; identifying a range of interview objectives; and exploring how the informant's own objectives and communication strategies can affect an informant interview.

Chapter One highlights the timeliness of the current research, identifying how the advent of intelligence-led policing contributed to the legalisation and professionalisation of informant handling. However, the use and conduct of informants has recently come under scrutiny, and it is argued that the covert nature of informant handling may have prevented the adoption of evidence-based practice. In particular, there are no recognised informant specific interview models. Therefore, Chapter Two will examine existing interview models that have previously been recommended for use with informants, and Chapter Three will examine the unique social factors of an informant interview that may hinder their success.

Given these unique social factors, Chapter Four reviews the extant literature pertaining to the social objectives of an informant interview, whilst Chapter Five reviews the literature relating to organisational objectives. A Study Space Analysis was conducted to identify how these objectives have previously been empirically tested, and this is reported in Chapter Six. The same objectives were then presented to practitioners as part of a novel online survey to determine their relative importance. Findings suggest that research conducted to date has failed to recognise the inter-dependence of these complex and sometimes competing objectives. The practitioner survey is fully reported in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Eight examines how the personal objectives of an informant are likely to impact their communication strategies. This was achieved by manipulating deception in a unique mock-informant paradigm followed by a triangulation of narrative analysis. Results indicate that informants communicate using a gossip narrative, but that the content, structure and narrative identity are all effected by an intention to deceive. The RWITS-US interview model was therefore designed to accommodate the informant's tendency to communicate narratively whilst attending to a range of handler objectives. A novel online paradigm was employed to test its efficacy against an existing interview model (PEACE), and this is presented in Chapter Nine.

Findings suggest that practitioners can benefit from the use of a bespoke informant interview model that has been specifically designed to meet a range of interview objectives whilst being cognisant of, and adaptive towards, the informant's narrative contribution. Whilst further research is recommended, these findings have implications for informant handlers who are coming under increasing public scrutiny and need to demonstrate their adherence to effective and ethical interviewing methods. These findings, recommendations and implications are fully discussed in Chapter Ten.

# Chapter 1<sup>1</sup>

## An Introduction to Human Source Intelligence

### Chapter Summary

Human source intelligence (HUMINT), including the use of informants, has a long and often secretive history, and an intelligence-led approach highlights the importance of HUMINT to domestic policing. However, with increased scrutiny of HUMINT practices, coupled with a drive for evidence-based policing, it is foreseeable that practitioners will progressively turn to the academic community for empirically proven and publicly accountable solutions to their practical problems. One important aspect of HUMINT practice susceptible to criticism, given its unique potential for abuse, is the interviewing of informants. This chapter will begin by considering some operational definitions for *HUMINT* and *informants* before examining in greater depth the social and political drivers for academic research in this area. Finally, the importance of conducting an ethical and effective informant interview will be discussed.

### The History of HUMINT

The New Testament account of Judas Iscariot and the betrayal of Jesus Christ may be history's most infamous portrayal of the use of a human source of intelligence (HUMINT hereafter). In its broadest sense, HUMINT simply refers to secret information provided by a human source (Coulam, 2006). However, the history of HUMINT is a long one. Five centuries before Christ was born a Chinese military general, Sun Tzu was already stressing the importance of spies (Clavell, 1995), and devoted an entire chapter to their use in his treatise *The Art of War*. Other historical spymasters extended their use from the military arena to the domestic sphere. During the sixteenth century Queen Elizabeth I's Secretary of State, Sir Francis Walsingham, utilised a network of informants to identify and prosecute potential traitors, including Mary Queen of Scots (Hutchinson, 2007). More recently, HUMINT provided the impetus for the 2003 invasion of Iraq (Drogin, 2007; Secretary of State, 2005). Indeed, throughout history a plethora of spies and spymasters, informants and handlers, have flickered briefly into the light of public scrutiny, only to disappear back into the murky world of doubt and uncertainty from which they emerged.

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<sup>1</sup> Elements of this chapter were included in the below publication. The present author was the sole author of all material included in this chapter from this publication: Moffett, L., Oxburgh, G. E., Dresser, P., Watson, S. J., & Gabbert, F. (2021). Inside the Shadows: A survey of UK HUMINT practitioners examining their considerations when handling a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS). *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*. doi:10.1080/13218719.2021.1926367

However, one thing that does become clear, is the necessity and importance of HUMINT, which remains equally as relevant in this modern age of technology as in any earlier epoch. Sun Tzu believed that the use of spies was an economically prudent act of humanity, as the intelligence they provided reduced the length of an armed conflict and lessened its impact, therefore sparing both lives and expense (Clavell, 1995). The British Government made a similar acknowledgement following the Iraq War. Despite being drawn into a conflict on the basis of HUMINT that later proved false (Drogin, 2007), a subsequent intelligence commission concluded that decision makers actually needed more HUMINT, not less, in order to make a fully informed decision (Secretary of State, 2005).

It can be seen, then, that HUMINT has a long history, and is likely to be equally as influential in the future. However, recent social and political developments have led to calls for greater transparency and accountability from government agencies, and (as will be outlined below) it is foreseeable that HUMINT practitioners will become increasingly professionalised and evidence-based in response.

### **Defining an Informant**

Various terms – such as HUMINT, human source, CHIS, or informant – are often used almost interchangeably by academics studying the field, and it is therefore worth considering the discrepancies that exist within these terms and how they will be used throughout this thesis. Coulam (2006) describes HUMINT as “... information gained from people” (p. 8). Nunan et al. (2020a) adopt a similarly broad view, defining HUMINT as “... the discipline charged with eliciting intelligence through interactions with human sources” (p. 1). Such definitions though, when applied to a forensic or law enforcement context, encompass so many conceivable situations, such as a witness statement, a suspect interview, or even a passer-by directing a police officer towards the scene of a crime, that they are rendered almost meaningless. Consequently, many researchers examining HUMINT have conceptualised an interview situation, and have drawn distinctions based upon the situational dilemma of the interviewer. These researchers distinguish between the different objectives of an interview; specifically, those conducted for the purpose of gaining evidence in a criminal investigation, and those conducted for the purpose of gathering intelligence. This is based on an understanding that what might constitute useful intelligence is not necessarily the same as good evidence, and vice versa (Borum, 2006). This distinction is expanded by Kleinman (2006b), who observes that evidential interviews conducted by law enforcement agencies are concerned with the investigation of past events, whereas intelligence interviews are seeking to understand events that might occur in the future. Evans et al. (2010) develop this distinction further; they accept that intelligence interviews may be about future activities but concede that they may also focus on past or present events. Therefore, instead of distinguishing evidential from intelligence interviews according to the timing of the illegal activity, they acknowledge that evidential interviews are conducted

with the aim of gaining a successful conviction, whilst claiming that the objective of an intelligence interview is to improve national security.

These distinctions assist when trying to identify a definition of HUMINT. Based upon these distinctions, the logical conclusion would be that HUMINT refers to intelligence provided by a human source, and that the intelligence does not form part of an evidential case for a future prosecution. Whilst this provides a negative definition of HUMINT (i.e., it is not evidence) a more positive definition may be possible by examining what actually constitutes intelligence. In short, intelligence is more than mere information. ACPO (2007) make the distinction between information and intelligence on the basis of its usefulness. They state that law enforcement agencies are entitled to collect information that relates to a policing purpose, such as the prevention of crime, identifying offenders and protecting life and property. However, before this information can be categorised as intelligence, it must first undergo an evaluative process, only being deemed intelligence when it is sufficient, either on its own or in conjunction with other pieces of information, to inform decision-making. ACPO (2007) also make reference to *intelligence requirements*, in recognition of the fact that law enforcement agencies and practitioners may be tasked to gather intelligence on behalf of senior decision makers. From this, it can be inferred that HUMINT is information obtained from a human source which is capable of informing the decision-making process. Such a conceptualisation expands the one proposed by Evans et al., (2010), as they limit the topic of an intelligence interview to matters of national security. In a policing context, this is clearly not the case.

However, even excluding information that clearly forms part of an evidential case, such as a witness statement, or suspect interview, this definition would still include a helpful member of the public – an individual unlikely to be considered a human source by most academics studying the field. Indeed, ACPO (2007) also recognize the wide-ranging nature of their definition, and therefore distinguish between a variety of potential HUMINT sources based upon the sensitivity of the information provided and how it was obtained. It is when considering the issue of sensitivity that a fuller definition of a human source becomes apparent. According to ACPO (2007) sensitivity is synonymous with the desire, on behalf of the source, to maintain a degree of confidentiality and anonymity, something which is unlikely to concern the helpful member of the public. This leads law enforcement agencies to adopt a *duty of care* (ACPO, 2007) towards their sources of information; to protect their desire for confidentiality. It is this, rather than the value of the information, the timing of the activity, or the seriousness of the offence, that ensures the intelligence gained through HUMINT does not enter into the evidential chain.

It is also the consideration of sensitivity that leads to the special protection accorded under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) 2000. This legislation formalises the concept of a human source of intelligence in England and Wales (Scotland is covered by the Regulation of Investigatory

Powers (Scotland) Act 2000), providing practitioners with a legal definition of a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) as any person who:

- a) establishes or maintains a personal or other relationship with another person for the covert purpose of facilitating the doing of anything falling within paragraph b) or c);
- b) covertly uses such a relationship to obtain information or to provide access to any information to another person; or
- c) covertly discloses information obtained by the use of such a relationship or as a consequence of the existence of such a relationship.

(Home Office, 2018, p.9)

This definition removes the focus from interview objectives, whether they be evidential or intelligence. Indeed, the Home Office Codes of Practice (2018) acknowledge that intelligence obtained from a CHIS is not exempt from entering the evidential chain, although the identity of the CHIS will remain protected and subject to public interest immunity. Furthermore, the legal definition of a CHIS purposely includes undercover police officers (IPCO, 2020). Whilst these officers will be gaining information about another person through the use of a covert relationship, as Potts (2009) observes, they will be expected to present this as evidence in a court of law should it be required.

Consequently, the definition of a CHIS can be seen to encapsulate two different actors: undercover police officers and civilian informants. This thesis will therefore focus upon the situational dilemma of a civilian informant (hereafter *informant*). The RIPA definition highlights the specific situational dilemma of the CHIS as an informant in three key ways: Firstly, they are used to obtain information; this means that the informant can be actively tasked to gather specific information on behalf of their handlers (ACPO, 2007; Home Office, 2018). Secondly, the information obtained is gathered through social interaction and is about a particular person of interest; consequently, the target information does not pertain to the actions or intentions of the informant themselves. Finally, the information is passed covertly, or, put another way, with the expectation of confidentiality (ACPO, 2007). This differentiates an informant from individuals who are likely to interact with law enforcement agencies in other forensic situations, such as suspect or witness interviews. For instance, the expectation of confidentiality precludes an informant from providing evidence as a prosecution witness (Home Office, 2018), whilst the emphasis on providing information about a person other than themselves differentiates them from a suspect, who would be interviewed about their own actions and intentions, albeit some offences may have been committed as part of a group. The nuances of this definition have rarely been applied by researchers examining intelligence interviews (see Vrij & Granhag, 2014 for a review),

consequently, it remains unclear whether previous findings are relevant or applicable to practitioners currently handling informants in the UK.

Indeed, the term interview is itself misleading, as it suggests a rather formalised encounter. Therefore, rather than referring to an interrogation or interview, Kleinman (2006b) uses the term de-brief when discussing a co-operative human source, whilst the Code of Practice refers to meetings (Home Office, 2018). Both of these terms conjure up images of an interaction which is far less formal than an interview, however, the term de-brief may prove too restrictive. Whilst an informant may be de-briefed for information, what the RIPA definition implies, and what is explicitly stated within the Code of Practice, is that a CHIS will be tasked to obtain information (Home Office, 2018). The term de-brief does not adequately account for the tasking process; therefore, the phrase *informant interview* will be used throughout this thesis to describe the interaction between an informant and their handler.

In summary, the wide-ranging term HUMINT can be applied to any intelligence (i.e., information capable of informing the decision-making process) that has been gathered from a human source (i.e., an individual providing sensitive information). The definition of a human source would include a legally defined CHIS. However, the term informant will be used to distinguish between undercover police officers and civilian informants, who are both encapsulated within the definition of a CHIS. Those responsible for managing informants are known as handlers (Home Office, 2018; IPCO, 2020), and any interaction between a handler and an informant will be referred to as an informant interview.

## **Drivers for Research**

### ***Intelligence-led Policing***

Just as in earlier ages, the requirement for timely intelligence is not limited to external military campaigns; it is equally important to domestic policing strategies. Pearse (2009) comments that, in the years following the attack on the World Trade Centre on 11 September 2001 (known as 9/11), the United Kingdom (UK) introduced a comprehensive legal framework aimed at countering the threat from international terrorism. The process actually began in the months prior to 9/11, with the Terrorism Act 2000 replacing previous temporary terrorism legislation; however, after 9/11 this was quickly followed by further legislative activity which was subsequently tested and amended through a series of terrorist prosecutions (Pearse, 2009). Given the high profile, and often devastating impact of terrorist offences, both in the UK and abroad, it is unsurprising that much of the counter terrorism legislation is preventative in nature; that is, it seeks to create terrorism related offences and control measures that allow law enforcement agencies to take action against identified suspects before the actual commission of a large-

scale atrocity (Pearse, 2009). It has been argued that the shift towards pre-emptive and preventative state intervention predates the emergence of international terrorism (Dixon, 2009); for Dixon, the globalised terrorist threat only served to increase the existing clamour towards a *control process*. He states that the traditional system of criminal justice is distinguishable by its emphasis on investigating, prosecuting and punishing an offender reactively, after the offence has taken place. According to Dixon, this traditional criminal justice system is being eroded and replaced by one emphasising public safety and community protection, aimed at minimising the risk of crime occurring in the first place. Terrorist legislation is just one, perhaps more obvious, example of this trend (Dixon, 2009). However, as both Pearse and Dixon recognise, for pre-emptive intervention to take place, there is a need for timely and accurate intelligence.

It is arguable that it was this historic shift towards preventative intervention that prompted various law enforcement agencies to adopt the intelligence-led policing model (Ratcliffe, 2002). The foundations of intelligence-led policing were laid in a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (1997) as a cost-effective means of reducing and preventing crime, and its principles were quickly adopted (Ratcliffe, 2002) resulting in the UK implementing the National Intelligence Model (NIM; Association of Chief Police Officers [ACPO], 2005; 2007). Although this is now dated, the importance of an intelligence-led approach can still be seen in the National Decision Model (The National Decision Model, 2014), which highlights the importance of gathering information as the first stage of decision-making.

### ***HUMINT Under Scrutiny***

In their introduction to intelligence-led policing, ACPO (now the National Police Chiefs Council [NPCC], 2007) list twenty potential sources of information, including things such as Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) and forensic science, but dedicate a substantial section to the identification and management of human sources of information. Given this historic shift towards intelligence-led policing, and the recognised importance of HUMINT (Ratcliffe, 2002), it is perhaps unsurprising that the RIPA 2000, was introduced in England and Wales, (with the complementary Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act) to provide a legislative framework for law enforcement agencies to conduct covert intelligence collection, including, in Part II of the act, the use and conduct of CHIS.

The importance of CHIS to the protection of national security and the prevention and detection of crime in the UK was re-affirmed when the Home Office released a factsheet to support the Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Act 2021. The act supplements RIPA and provides further legislative protection to CHIS, whilst still allowing governmental agencies to authorise CHIS to commit criminal offences as part of their conduct (Home Office, 2021). As part of this proposal the government noted that within a single year (2018) not only had CHIS helped to identify and disrupt a

number of terrorist plots, but they had also led to the disruption of over 30 threats to life and the safeguarding of over 200 people by the National Crime Agency, whilst the use of CHIS in a single force area (the Metropolitan Police Service) resulted in 3,500 arrests along with the seizure of over 100 firearms and 400 other weapons (Home Office, 2021).

HUMINT can, therefore, be seen as a cornerstone of an intelligence-led approach to criminal justice that seeks to minimise risk and maximise public safety. However, it is arguable that the Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Act 2021, was prompted by increasing public scrutiny of covert operational practices. This can be evidenced by two enquiries: Operation Kenova (Operation Kenova, 2021); and the Undercover Policing Inquiry (Undercover Policing Inquiry, 2021). Operation Kenova is an independent investigation led by Bedfordshire Constabulary investigating the historic use of human sources in Northern Ireland, in particular the source codenamed Stakeknife. Stakeknife has been the subject of numerous media reports and documentaries, and is believed to have been a high-ranking member of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) responsible for several unauthorised criminal offences whilst working as a government source (Stakeknife, 2019). Similarly, the Undercover Policing Inquiry is investigating the historic conduct of undercover police officers, in particular those of the Special Demonstration Squad, to determine whether they also committed criminal offences whilst deployed covertly.

### ***Evidence-based Policing (EBP)***

Whilst this scrutiny may already have prompted new legislation to clarify the exact situations and circumstances that a CHIS can be authorised to partake in criminal conduct, it can be envisaged that it is equally likely to prompt a professionalisation of covert operations and methodology. This would be in keeping with the recent emergence of an evidence-based policing culture (Fleming & Rhodes, 2017; Heaton & Tong, 2015; Sherman, 2013). The drive towards EBP was partly prompted by a governmental desire for greater accountability from an influential public institution (Palmer et al., 2019; Sherman, 2013), and prompted the foundation of the College of Policing (CoP hereafter) in England and Wales (CoP, n.d). The CoP is committed to promoting evidence-based policing; however, it could be argued that the covert nature of HUMINT has insulated it from the incursions of an evidence-based culture (Billingsley, 2009). Given the recognised importance of HUMINT, increasing public scrutiny, and a shift towards evidence-based practice, it is foreseeable that HUMINT practitioners in the UK (and elsewhere) will increasingly turn to academic research for evidence-based solutions to human source management. One particular area of CHIS handling that is likely to benefit from a psychological evidence-base is that of informant interviewing (Borum, 2006; Hazlett, 2006; Mendez, 2021; Nunan et al., 2020b; Potts, 2009).

## **The Importance of Interviewing**

The treatment of terrorist detainees in military detention centres, such as Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, in an attempt to extract information from them resulted in both scrutiny and criticism for HUMINT practitioners and their methods of interviewing (Alison & Alison, 2017; Brandon, 2014; Otis, 2006). Having been employed as the United Nations (U.N.) Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez recognised that interviews conducted between citizens and public authorities were often a permissive environment for ill treatment and unethical practice, consequently, he was inspired to compile a series of Principles on Effective Interviewing for Investigations and Information Gathering, hereafter known as The Mendez Principles (Association for the Prevention of Torture [APT], 2021).

Although not legally binding, the principles were drafted with the support of the Association for the Prevention of Torture, the Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, and the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, and were compiled with the assistance of academic experts in the field of psychology, criminology, law and human rights from around the world. Whilst the principles are predominantly aimed at improving the treatment of criminal suspects and detainees, their scope is wide ranging. The document clearly states that it is aimed at both law enforcement and intelligence officials, and defines an interview as "... a structured conversation where one person (the 'interviewer') seeks to gather information from another (the 'interviewee') as part of any investigation or intelligence operation" (APT, 2021, p. 1). This would clearly include an informant interview. The principles outline the desirable foundations of any interview as science, law and ethics. They state that interviewers should be cognisant of the law and adhere to a code of practice that promotes fairness and honesty, with a focus on gathering information. It is therefore worth considering the legal framework and code of practice pertaining to the use and conduct of informants in England and Wales.

RIPA provides a legal framework for informants (included within the definition of CHIS), and is supplemented by the Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Act. As such, informants in England and Wales are legal entities and are afforded certain protections. RIPA legislates that anyone falling within the definition of a CHIS should be authorised, and that as an authorised CHIS they will benefit from having a dedicated person responsible for their security and welfare (handler), a further person who will maintain general oversight of their use and conduct (controller), and that records of their use and conduct will be maintained, whilst protecting their identity (Home Office, 2018). Furthermore, it must be satisfied that their authorisation is both necessary and proportionate on specified grounds, including the prevention and detection of crime and the protection of national security (Home Office, 2018). The Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Act provides further protection for

CHIS who may be asked to partake in criminal activity to further the investigation or operation for which they are authorised.

The implementation of these legislative requirements is outlined by the Codes of Practice (Home Office, 2018), and oversight is maintained by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO). In practice, informants are managed by Dedicated Source Units (DSU) which comprise of specialist officers who are not involved in any other investigative activity (Henry et al., 2019). Within DSU's there are designated handlers (Home Office, 2018; IPCO, 2020). These are specially trained police officers responsible for the day-to-day management, security, welfare and direction of the informant, as well as being the person responsible for recording any information supplied. It should also be noted that the RIPA legislation applies to a wide range of government authorities and is not strictly limited to law enforcement agencies, consequently, a handler is not necessarily a police officer; however, these are the individuals most likely to benefit from a bespoke informant interview model. Controllers are those responsible for maintaining oversight of the informants use and conduct, whilst Authorising Officers ensure that informants are properly authorised and that their use and conduct is both necessary and proportionate (Home Office, 2018; IPCO, 2020). IPCO is an independent body that acts on behalf of the Investigatory Powers Commissioner; IPCO's role is to provide independent oversight of the covert tactics employed by public authorities, including the use and conduct of CHIS (IPCO, 2020). They annually inspect CHIS authorisations to ensure legality, transparency and accountability by public authorities, and will make recommendations to public authorities where it is deemed necessary.

It can be seen, then, that the use and conduct of informants within England and Wales is a highly legislated and accountable activity, and it could be anticipated that handlers will be expected to adhere to international standards of ethics, as outlined in The Mendez Principles. However, researchers have found that handlers do not apply any strategic approach to interviewing (Nunan et al., 2020c; Potts, 2009), and that many are not even aware of the current investigative interviewing model recommended by the CoP (Nunan et al., 2020b). This is problematic because interviewing is recognised as a "... complex adaptive process" (APT, 2021, p. 13), and effective interviewing requires a considered and strategic approach based upon empirical research (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992; APT, 2021). Consequently, there is a risk that handlers are not maximising intelligence gathering opportunities. There is an additional risk, as evidenced at places such as Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, that without a structured framework to direct their interviewing practices, when faced with the pressure of having to gather high-stakes intelligence in a collapsing timeframe, HUMINT professionals may revert to unethical practices (Alison & Alison, 2017; Brandon, 2014; Kleinman, 2006a). This thesis will therefore seek to holistically examine the dynamic that exists between an informant and their handler during an informant interview, and will suggest a suitable interview framework that can be adopted by handlers to meet their

interview objectives whilst being cognisant of, and adaptive towards, the informants unique situational dilemma.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

HUMINT, including the use of informants, has an important role to play in an intelligence-led approach to policing that seeks to minimise risk and maximise public safety. Informants have a recognised legal status within England and Wales, their use and conduct are dictated by legislation, and public authorities managing informants are held to account by an independent body (IPCO, 2020). However, there is no guidance for handlers on how to conduct an informant interview. This exposes handlers to the risk of falling below appropriate standards for an ethical and effective interview, especially as one of those standards is that interviewing should be based on scientific knowledge (APT, 2021). Therefore, the next chapter considers which interview models currently exist that could be employed by informant handlers.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Existing Interview Models**

#### **Chapter Summary**

With an increased academic interest in HUMINT, it is perhaps unsurprising that researchers have begun to look towards the application of a structured interview model, as the development of other psychologically based interview models have already proven successful within other investigative contexts. Whilst there is a broad range of interview models and techniques, many HUMINT practitioners and researchers have espoused the use of the existing Cognitive Interview (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992; Potts, 2009) or PEACE model (Bull et al., 2009; Evans, et al., 2013; Nunan et al., 2020b) for use with human sources of information. Concurrently, Granhag et al. have developed a new interview protocol, known as the Scharff Technique, which they recommend for use with a human source (Granhag et al., 2015; Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos, 2014).

There is voluminous research examining the efficacy of each of these models across a variety of investigative contexts, however, given the often wide-ranging definition of a human source in the academic literature (see Chapter One), it is not always clear whether these interview methods would be suitable for use with an informant. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the potential efficacy of these particular models within the context of an informant-handler interaction.

#### **The Cognitive Interview**

In 1975 it was identified that eyewitness testimony was the key factor in determining whether or not a criminal investigation reached a successful conclusion; ten years later the Cognitive Interview (CI) was developed as a method of improving eyewitness accounts (Geiselman et al., 1985). The principle underpinning the CI is the integration of empirically proven memory enhancing techniques into a structured interview format. Importantly, CI techniques need to improve memory retrieval; Geiselman et al. note that there are well documented mnemonics to assist encoding and storage, but these are of little benefit to eyewitnesses, who acquire target information unexpectedly in a rapidly unfolding and highly emotional situation. Consequently, Geiselman et al. developed four mnemonics based on the theory that retrieval cues that overlap with encoding features are most effective, and that varied retrieval cues may be necessary to access stored memories. The first mnemonic is the mental reinstatement of the environmental and personal context at the time of the event, which ought to increase the overlap between retrieval and encoding. The second mnemonic was also designed to increase overlap between encoding features and retrieval by encouraging the witness to report everything, no matter how trivial it may appear,

as one memory may trigger another. The third and fourth mnemonics were both designed to encourage varied retrieval, by asking witnesses to report the event in different orders and from different perspectives.

Fisher et al. (1989) realised that whilst these four mnemonics addressed the interviewers objectives (to improve witness recall), the CI did not consider the perspective of the witness themselves. They recognised that witnesses are likely to store and recall information at various levels, ranging from the general (i.e., it was a bank robbery), to the detailed (including suspect actions, descriptions etc.), and whilst the detailed level will hold information of investigative value, the witness may prefer to communicate at the general level. Fisher et al. therefore introduced four communicative adaptations to enhance the CI mnemonics. Firstly, interviewers should be prepared to guide witnesses through the mental reinstatement of context, by helping them to focus on external or environmental features, emotions and cognitions. Secondly, the interviewer should recognise that focused retrieval requires concentrated effort, and support the witness in this effort. Thirdly, there should be a realisation that numerous retrieval attempts may be required before full and complete retrieval is achieved, therefore, witnesses should be encouraged to make several attempts at retrieval even if the first is unsuccessful. Finally, the interviewer should be adaptable, and seek to use witness compatible questioning in the understanding that each witness will store and organise their memories for an event differently. They also developed a structured approach to the application of the CI, as outlined: (i) establish rapport and explain psychological principles; (ii) encourage an uninterrupted account of the event; (iii) gather information by probing mental representations of the event; (iv) review the topics discussed; and (v) formally conclude the interview.

Given its foundations in scientific and cognitive theory, the CI has received strong support from the academic community, and has been empirically tested across a variety of paradigms. In most experimental scenarios mock-witnesses are shown a recording of a mock-crime and are subsequently interviewed about what they witnessed (Kohnken et al., 1999). Given the variety of event stimulus used, control group interviews and even variations within the CI itself, assessing the benefits of the CI is difficult, however, Kohnken et al. conducted a meta-analysis consisting of 55 experiments and found that CI interviews performed significantly better, in terms of the amount of correct information recalled, when compared to other types of investigative interview. Additionally, the CI proved even more advantageous in more ecologically valid experimental paradigms, such as those using live-time events rather than pre-recorded ones.

This is not the complete picture though. Kohnken et al. (1999) also found that the CI increased the number of incorrect details elicited, bringing the overall accuracy rate of the CI (the proportion of correct information from the total amount of information reported) to 85%, which was comparable to that of non-CI interviews (82%). Furthermore, there is evidence that witnesses find it difficult to adhere to the CI principles (Fisher et al., 1990, cited in Kohnken et al., 1999), that CI training does not embed

into practice (Dando et al., 2011; Fisher, 2010) and that police officers perceive the CI to be too time-consuming to apply (Kebbel & Milne, 1998). Findings that practitioners fail to employ the CI have prompted researchers to continually modify it, in an attempt to enhance its use and application. This began in the early 1990's with the introduction of social and communicative components (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992, cited in Dando et al., 2011), the removal of some mnemonic components (Davis et al., 2005), the use of a sketch to reinstate context (Dando et al., 2011) and a self-administered interview (SAI; Gabbert et al., 2009). However, there are other reasons that the CI may not be regularly employed by practitioners. The report that prompted the development of the CI, claiming that eyewitness testimony was the determining factor in investigative success, was created in 1975. Since that time there have been significant advances in both traditional and digital forensic science (Peterson et al., 2010; Hayes, 2020), and the importance of eyewitness testimony may no longer be as pronounced as it once was.

Despite evidence that the overwhelming academic support for the CI does not necessarily translate into overwhelming practitioner application (Fisher, 2010; Dando et al., 2011), researchers have recommended its use in a variety of settings, including medical examinations (Kohnken, 1999), suspect interviews (Dando et al., 2011) and of course, informant de-briefs (Potts, 2009). Indeed, Leins et al. (2014) developed their own version of the CI to be used specifically with human sources who have experienced multiple meetings with persons of interest over a span of time. However, whilst diverging from the usual mock-witness paradigm, the participants in the Leins et al. study still simulate passive sources of information; in other words, they obtained the target information incidentally and are subsequently being asked to retrieve it. This is the exact type of scenario that the CI was designed for; the CI was developed to enhance retrieval of memories that were encoded incidentally. However, this does not replicate the operational reality of an informant, who has been tasked to obtain information from or about their social contacts, and is aware that they will subsequently be asked to recall such information by their handler (Storm et al., 2015). In these situations, mnemonics to enhance retrieval are likely to be less relevant than those designed to enhance encoding, consequently, the benefits of using the CI are likely to be less pronounced. Additionally, the obstacles that dissuade investigative interviewers from using the CI may present an even greater barrier to informant handlers, who need to maintain long-term rapport with their informants (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Henry et al., 2019; Nunan et al., 2020a), therefore they may not want to unnecessarily encourage their informants to engage in the kind of time-consuming and effortful retrieval required by the CI (Nunan et al., 2020b).

Ultimately, there is a growing recognition that the CI should not be viewed as a holistic interview model, but that it should provide "... a toolbox of techniques" (Fisher, 2010, p. 31) which can be used as required with regards to the information objectives, the interview conditions and whether or not the interviewee reacts positively to their use (or proposed use). Consequently, subsequent interview models

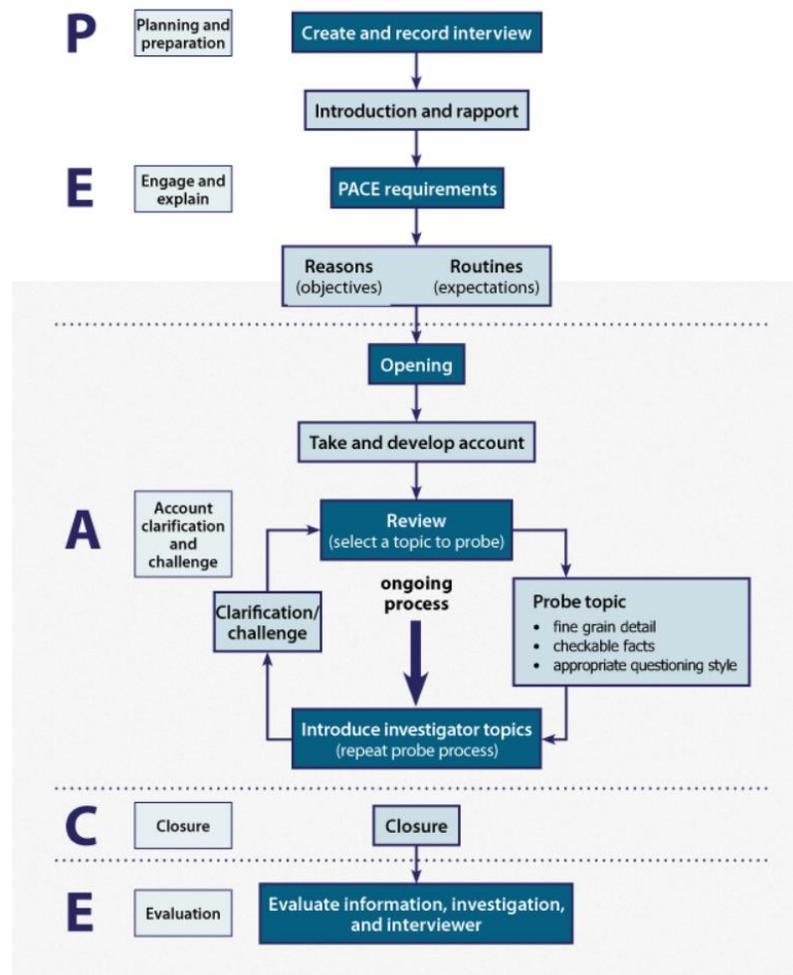
should incorporate sufficient flexibility for CI components to be incorporated at the discretion of the interviewer.

### **The PEACE Model**

One interview model that does recognise the CI as *a toolbox of techniques* that can be applied as circumstances dictate, is the PEACE model (a mnemonic of the five sequential phases of an investigative interview: **P**lanning and preparation, **E**ngage and explain, **A**ccount, clarify and challenge, **C**losure and **E**valuation [CPTU, 1992a; 1992b]). The PEACE model is the only interview model currently recommended by the CoP (2020). This model was primarily designed for use with co-operative eyewitnesses, (Bull et al., 2009; Walsh & Milne, 2008), but can also be used in suspect interviews (CoP, 2020), and some academics have recommended its adoption when interviewing informants (Evans et al., 2013; Nunan et al., 2020a; Nunan et al., 2020b). However, the PEACE model has never been tested in an informant specific paradigm, and its generalisability should not be assumed.

Development of the PEACE model began following the introduction of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984 (PACE), which outlawed the use of coercive tactics in suspect interviews in England and Wales. However, this left police officers without any practical guidance on how to conduct an ethical interview, thus prompting the development of the PEACE model throughout the 1990's (Walsh & Bull, 2010). The PEACE model is a rapport-based information-gathering interview model that is designed to be applied in a variety of forensic contexts, such as victim, witness or suspect interviews, consequently, the CoP accepts and recommends flexibility in how each phase of the model can be applied (CoP, 2020); for example, some situations (i.e., those involving vulnerable witnesses) may require the incorporation of CI techniques when obtaining an account (Ministry of Justice [MoJ], 2022). Notwithstanding this acknowledged flexibility, the PEACE model itself consists of five phases that ought to be applied sequentially, regardless of context. Figure 2.1 is a visual representation of the PEACE model taken from the CoP website (CoP, 2020).

Figure 2.1 Visual representation of the PEACE interview model.



Retrieved from <https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/investigations/investigative-interviewing/> on 14/09/2021

*Planning and preparation* is designed to ensure that all available information is considered prior to the interview and the interviewer is properly prepared. The *engage and explain* phase is used to establish rapport with the interviewee, with the CoP recommending active listening as a means of achieving this; during this phase the interviewer should explain the purpose of the interview (including the interview objectives and how these will be met), before outlining any expectations they may have of the interviewee. The third phase is used to obtain the interviewee's *account*, and this begins with an open question, again, the CoP recommend the use of active listening to support the interviewee whilst providing their account; the interviewer then clarifies the account by breaking it into thematic topics and probing each of these individually, funnelling the questioning from open questions into specific closed questions where necessary. The interviewer will *close* the interview by summarising the information provided and providing the interviewee with a final opportunity to add anything further before explaining

what will happen next. Once the interview has concluded the interviewer should *evaluate* the interview to assess how the information gained fits into the wider investigation, as well as assessing their own performance (CoP, 2019). Importantly, the PEACE model is a flexible model. Not only is it responsive to the information provided by the interviewee, but memory enhancing techniques can be incorporated into the model, especially for significant witnesses to serious offences (MoJ, 2022).

The PEACE model is now widely employed by law enforcement and other governmental investigative agencies around the world (Oxburgh et al, 2011; Walsh & Milne, 2008) and researchers continually assess its implementation to identify failings and recommend improvements in both training and application (Clarke & Milne, 2001; Walsh & Bull, 2010; Walsh & Bull, 2012). Indeed, it is recognised by the CoP (2020) that the PEACE model provides the foundation for Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interviews with vulnerable witnesses (MoJ, 2022). It is the suitability of PEACE to witness interviews that leads Nunan et al., to recommend its usage with informants, who they conceptualise as a special kind of witness (2020a; Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, & May, 2020).

However, in their study of recorded interactions between actual informants and their handlers, Nunan et al. (2020c) found that handlers themselves do not employ the PEACE interview model. Nunan et al. (2020b; 2020c) claim that this is due to a lack of training, however, PEACE interviewing forms part of PIP Level 1 investigator training; this is foundational training for those investigating volume and more serious crime (CoP, 2021). The sample of recordings examined by Nunan et al. (2020c) were taken from handlers involved in Counter Terrorism investigations, and so it seems highly unlikely that these particular individuals were untrained in the use of PEACE, or that they could not access training if it is deemed appropriate. The conclusion then, must be that either a) training in PEACE interviewing is not deemed appropriate for police handlers, or b) trained officers are choosing not to use it.

The disparity between Nunan et al.'s recommendation that PEACE should be used by handlers (2020a; 2020b) and the discovery that it is not being used (2020c), is perhaps due to their conceptualisation of an informant as akin to a witness (Nunan et al., 2020a; Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, & May, 2020). This may be an over-simplification of the unique operational dilemma confronted by an informant, and the complexities of their relationship to their handler. Firstly, rather than being an incidental witness to an unexpected event, the informant has been specifically tasked to obtain information about their known criminal associates (Hess & Amir, 2002; Home Office, 2018; Storm et al., 2015; Yousef & Brackin, 2010). Secondly, whereas the functional and goal-oriented rapport described in the PEACE model may be sufficient for a police officer interviewing a co-operative eyewitness, the relationship between handler and informant is much deeper, long term and more complex (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Henry et al., 2019; Nunan et al., 2020a; Stanier & Nunan, 2021). For handlers, rapport is not simply about eliciting co-operation or intelligence from a single interview (or even a series of interviews about the same event); rather, rapport is established to maintain a long term co-operative

relationship (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Henry et al., 2019) and often results in handlers conducting meetings with their informants solely to manage their personal welfare (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Stanier & Nunan, 2021). In this kind of relationship, the rather functional *engage and explain* phase of the PEACE interview may even be counter-productive, as it might serve to re-enforce the authoritarian role of the police handler, who is having to explain the objectives and expectations of the interview to their informant.

Thus, it can be seen that whilst the PEACE model provides a familiar rapport-based information-gathering model, it may not be suitable in every conceivable interview scenario. Indeed, despite Nunan et al. (2020a; 2020b) recommending the use of PEACE with informants, the CoP do not endorse that recommendation. The CoP state that PEACE can be used to interview victims, witnesses, and suspects, but make no mention of informants (or CHIS). With PEACE being the only interview model provided by the CoP, this leaves handlers without any guidance for interviewing informants.

### **The Scharff Technique**

Granhag et al. developed the first interview strategy specifically designed to be used in a HUMINT situation. This was achieved by attempting to model and empirically test techniques employed by a second world war luftwaffe interrogator, Hanns-Joachim Scharff (Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos, 2014; Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Kleinman, 2014; Granhag et al., 2015). This approach is referred to by Granhag et al. as the *Scharff Technique* (ST), and is based upon Scharff's own practices during World War II. According to Oleszkiewicz, Granhag and Montecinos, Scharff developed four tactics to interrogate allied prisoners of war (PoW): (i) adopt a friendly approach; (ii) do not pressure interviewees for information; (iii) create the *illusion of knowing it all*; (iv) present statements of fact to be confirmed or denied.

The ST evolved over a series of experiments conducted by Granhag et al., however, the framework in which it is tested and developed remains consistent. Firstly, HUMINT is broadly defined as "... the gathering of intelligence by means of an interaction between two or more individuals" (Granhag, Montecinos, & Oleszkiewicz, 2015, p. 97), and that "... the general purpose of human intelligence gathering is to collect intelligence in order to improve national security" (Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos, 2014, p. 478). Secondly, in the experimental paradigm developed by Granhag et al. to test the efficacy of the ST, participants (in the role of a mock-human source) are tasked to manage the information they possess, revealing enough to the interviewer to appear co-operative, and therefore gain benefits from their compliance, whilst withholding sufficient information to maintain their allegiance to the mock terrorist group on which they are informing. Granhag et al. (2015) identified four

dependent measures to assess the success of the ST: (i) the amount of new information revealed; (ii) the source's / participant's perception of how much new information they revealed; (iii) the source's / participant's perception of the interviewer's objectives; (iv) the source's / participant's perception of how much information was already known to the interviewer. Additionally, although they acknowledge that the ST would be best suited to sources in a custodial setting (Granhag, Montecinos, & Oleszkiewicz, 2015; Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos, 2014; Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Kleinman, 2014), proponents do claim that the ST could be employed in a variety of HUMINT situations involving a partially co-operative human source, including PoW, detainees, suspects and informants (Granhag, Oleszkiewicz et al., 2015; Granhag et al., 2016).

In the first experiment of the ST, it was compared to two other interview techniques: an open question technique and a specific question technique (Granhag, Montecinos, & Oleszkiewicz, 2015). Results revealed that although the ST made it more difficult for participants to understand the interviewer's objectives, there was no significant difference in the actual amount of information revealed between any of the conditions, meaning that the ST was only superior on the subjective measure of discerning the interviewer's objectives. Granhag, Montecinos and Oleszkiewicz (2015) conclude that the failure of the ST was a result of the *illusion of knowing it all* being disrupted by the introduction of statements to be confirmed or denied (although two of the statements employed in the experiment were true statements to be confirmed, and should therefore have served to strengthen the illusion).

Subsequent iterations of the ST (which thenceforth became the standard ST interview) adopted a phased interview approach, and also incorporated the open-question technique into the ST. Therefore, the standard ST should begin with the *illusion of knowing it all*, followed by an *open ended invitation* to add any additional details (prompting a free narrative response from the mock-informant); this should be followed by *confirmatory statements*, stating presumed facts in the form of a summary which the mock-informant can confirm or deny, before ending the interview with another *open-ended invitation* to add any further information (Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos, 2014). The operational definition of *information elicitation* was also expanded to highlight the importance of disguising the interviewer's objectives (Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos, 2014); this of course, was the dependent measure on which the ST had previously proven its superiority (Granhag, Montecinos, & Oleszkiewicz, 2015). Additionally, the Direct Approach (DA) became the most frequently employed control condition. The DA is the name given to a tactic recommended in the U.S. Army Field Manual, and consists of a variety of open and specific questions presented in a business-like manner (Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos, 2014). Importantly, the DA is designed to be used on co-operative detainees (Evans et al., 2014), and is not designed to disguise the interviewers intelligence objectives. It is therefore arguable that the DA is an unsuitable comparator and that its ubiquitous use has served to magnify the advantage of the ST (Luke, 2021).

Some limitations of the ST have been noted. Oleszkiewicz, Granhag and Montecinos (2014) recognise that, for the *illusion of knowing it all* to be effective, the interviewer must be in possession of a quantity of accurate information; however, they temper this by pointing out that interviewers such as Scharff and Ali Soufan have successfully established such an illusion with a single piece of information. They also acknowledge that there may be situations where an interviewer would not want to reveal how much information they possess to a human source, especially if the source is not in custody, as they may then report this information back to their associates. Despite these limitations though, Oleszkiewicz, Granhag and Montecinos argue that the ST could be applicable in a variety of HUMINT scenarios. However, the experimental paradigm used throughout ST research only simulates one very specific HUMINT scenario, whereby the source can be granted their freedom and passage out of the country if they co-operate with authorities (Luke, 2021).

Additionally, the definition of information elicitation employed across ST research introduces a situation where the true objectives of the interviewer must be concealed. The implicit assumption within this definition is that the source is generally hostile and unco-operative, and cannot be trusted. Whilst this may be the case in many situations, it is completely contrary to the one described by Hess and Amir (2002), who observe that the ability to develop a trust based relationship between handler and informant, and the inclusion of the informant in setting objectives and developing suitable tactics, are key factors to success. Nor does it adhere to the definition of a CHIS within UK legislation, as someone who can be specifically tasked to obtain information on their handlers behalf (Home Office, 2018). If an informant is to be actively tasked to gather intelligence, presumably they are to be informed of their handler's intelligence objectives. Consequently, the relevance of the ST is restricted to specific situations involving potentially hostile sources with historic knowledge of interest.

A further problem with the ST is the confounding of tactics. The benefits of creating the *illusion of knowing it all* are regularly extolled, as this is supposed to prompt the source to provide new information in an attempt to appear co-operative (Granhag, Kleinman, & Oleszkiewicz, 2016). However, the *illusion of knowing it all* tactic is employed at the outset of the interview in conjunction with the *friendly approach* and the *open-question technique*. Having been established as a successful comparator (Granhag, Montecinos, & Oleszkiewicz, 2015), the open-question technique is consumed within subsequent iterations of the ST, and employed immediately after the illusion of knowing it all (Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos, 2014). The value of using open-ended questions to elicit accurate and reliable information is widely recognised (Oxburgh et al., 2010), consequently, it is unclear whether the elicitation advantage of the ST when compared to the DA lies with the *illusion* or the *open-ended question*. Additionally, the potential impact of the friendly approach is largely ignored, despite other research suggesting that this could also contribute towards information elicitation (Alison et al., 2013; Alison et al., 2014; Alison & Alison, 2017; Evans et al., 2013; Redlich et al., 2014; Russano et al.,

2014; Russano et al., 2014). Conflating these tactics at the beginning of the ST protocol make it difficult to separate their individual contributions. This is an important omission, as revealing intelligence to an unco-operative source, even one in custody, is likely to be a controversial tactic, and runs contrary to previous research expounding the Strategic Use of Evidence (SUE; Tekin et al., 2015; Tekin et al., 2016). Consequently, if the advantage of the ST lies in the *friendly approach* or the use of an *open ended question*, rather than the *illusion of knowing it all*, there would be less of a requirement to reveal unsolicited information to a potentially hostile source.

ST proponents also claim that presenting factual statements to be confirmed or denied is a more effective means of elicitation than asking direct questions (Granhag, Kleinman, & Oleszkiewicz, 2016). However, these closed statements could be interpreted as leading or inappropriate questions (Oxburgh et al., 2010). Leading questions have been shown to result in witness suggestibility (Sharman & Powell, 2012), consequently, an informant subjected to ST may confirm something that never occurred. Furthermore, in terms of information elicitation, the benefits of presenting factual statements for confirmation or denial as opposed to asking direct questions are not clear. Both May et al. (2014) and Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, and Kleinman (2014) compared the different phases of the ST to the DA, and neither study found any significant advantage of the ST during the second phase of the interview – when participants were presented with either confirmatory statements or direct questions. Additionally, rather than simply learning what an informant does and does not know (as would be the case with a simple confirmation or denial), a handler will also want to explore the context of their informant’s knowledge, to establish how they know a particular snippet of information, and to identify associated intelligence that could help to verify the veracity of the source (Drogin, 2007; Nunan et al., 2020b; Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 2005), and would therefore want to avoid closed questions. Another supposed benefit of using confirmatory statements rather than direct questions would appear to be that they disguise the interviewer’s intelligence objectives (Granhag, Kleinman, & Oleszkiewicz, 2016). However, hiding intelligence objectives may be impractical with a tasked informant and, given the acknowledged danger of suggestibility, the benefits of using confirmatory statements simply to mask intelligence objectives would need to be demonstrated.

If disguising intelligence objectives is removed as a valid measure of success, the merits of the ST must be considered on its ability to obtain new information. When compared to the DA, the ST generally elicits significantly more new intelligence. However, it is worth noting the exact amounts of new information gleaned. In the first test of the ST 26% of all available pieces of information were revealed (Granhag, Montecinos, & Oleszkiewicz, 2015). The second iteration, adopting a phased interview approach, resulted in 36% of available information being revealed (Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos, 2014). Subsequent experiments compared different versions of the ST, and similar percentages of available information (between 22% to 28%) were revealed (May et al., 2014;

Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Kleinman, 2014). Overall, the average amount of new information revealed by participants interviewed with a version of the ST is approximately 33% of all available information (Granhag et al., 2020; Granhag, Montecinos, & Oleszkiewicz, 2015; Granhag, Kleinman, & Oleszkiewicz, 2016; Granhag, Oleszkiewicz, & Kleinman, 2016; Granhag, Oleszkiewicz et al., 2015; May & Granhag, 2016a; May & Granhag, 2016b; May et al., 2014; Oleszkiewicz et al., 2017a; Oleszkiewicz et al., 2017b; Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Kleinman, 2014; Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos, 2014; Rantamaki et al., 2020). Whilst these results are generally higher than the DA, it should be remembered that other interview models tested by different researchers have also compared favourably when measured against the DA (Evans et al., 2014; Evans et al., 2013), including a technique designed to increase anxiety and negative emotions (Evans et al., 2014).

Taken as a whole, the effectiveness of the ST is perhaps overstated, whilst the limitations are downplayed (Luke, 2021). It is difficult to imagine why an informant handler (at least in the context of a legally defined CHIS) would seek to indirectly elicit information whilst obfuscating their intelligence objectives. Furthermore, the implicit deception practised as part of the *illusion of knowing it all* and the leading nature of *confirmatory statements* may make the ST incompatible with the recently published Mendez Principles (APT, 2021) on ethical interviewing. Consequently, the ST would be an unsuitable informant interview model.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

There are a number of interview models that are available for use by informant handlers, with each adopting a slightly different approach to the collection of information. The current chapter has focused on three interview models that have previously been recommended for use with informants: The CI; PEACE and ST.

Each of these has its benefits, however, there are also reasons why these models may not be wholly suitable for informant interviews. For example, the CI (and its various iterations) is designed around the use of retrieval mnemonics to assist the recall of memories that were encoded incidentally or unexpectedly (Fisher et al., 1989). Given that informants are likely to be tasked to specifically obtain target information (Hess & Amir, 2002; Home Office, 2018; Storm et al., 2015), and are likely to have encoded it as social information that can be easily recalled for their handler, the CI retrieval techniques may not be the most appropriate method of maximising intelligence gain from an active informant. Likewise, the PEACE model is conceived as a rapport-based information-gathering model, however, there are varying levels of rapport, and the depth and degree of rapport that is effective in one particular context may not be appropriate in another (Gabbert et al., 2021). Therefore, the functional rapport established as part of the PEACE model process may not be sufficient for a handler seeking to develop

a long term collaborative relationship with an informant. And whilst the ST has proven successful at masking the interviewer's objectives, this is unlikely to be a necessary (or even practical) consideration for informant handlers. Furthermore, in light of the Mendez Principles (APT, 2021) some of the tactics deployed within the ST could be construed as being unethical.

What is clear is that none of these models address the unique operational and situational dilemma of an informant. Consequently, whilst interview models currently exist that could be employed by informant handlers (and may indeed be appropriate in certain situations), there is no bespoke informant interview model that takes account of the unique situational dilemma of an informant. Therefore, to further the development of a bespoke informant interview model, the next chapter will examine in more detail the unique situational and operational dilemma faced by a long-standing active informant.

## **Chapter 3**

### **The Social Informant**

#### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter will consider the unique situational dilemma of a tasked informant and how this is likely to impact the social interaction between themselves and their handler. It will be argued that the operational activity of a tasked informant and the unique social dynamics that exist between themselves and their handlers will impact informant interviews in three key areas. Firstly, the type of information targeted by informants will be social information about their associates, and this will affect how it is stored in and recalled from their memory. Secondly, the relationship between handler and informant is likely to be one of near parity and equivalence, and this is likely to influence any deception practiced by the informant. Thirdly, the combination of social information and a balanced power dynamic is likely to affect how informants communicate information to their handler. An understanding of each of these areas would clearly benefit the development of an informant specific interview model, and so the literature pertaining to each of these is reviewed within this chapter.

#### **A Unique Dilemma**

Whilst academics have been able to identify a number of psychological themes that are likely to be relevant to informant handlers (such as building rapport, eliciting information, and detecting deception; see Intelligence Science Board Study on Educating Information, 2006), there is a clear lack of empirical research examining the specific situational dilemma of an informant, with a research bias in favour of detained enemy combatants resulting in most empirical studies emulating standard suspect or witness paradigms (see Brandon, 2014, and Vrij & Granhag, 2014, for recent reviews). Whilst some researchers have specifically informed participants that they are to adopt the role of undercover officers or informants (i.e., Hope et al., 2019; Potts, 2009), these studies have gone on to play participants a pre-recorded scenario (video or audio) and asked them to recall it thereafter. Consequently, regardless of the role-play instruction, the paradigm is similar to many mock-witness experimental procedures (i.e., Hope et al., 2013). The fact that similar results are obtained when similar procedures are employed is unsurprising, and whilst these findings cannot be dismissed as being irrelevant to informant handlers, they do not necessarily add as much value to the research area as the studies themselves suggest.

What researchers have so far neglected to examine is the uniquely active role of an informant as a social entity. Firstly, the decision to engage with their handlers is a voluntary one, and there is no legal compulsion for them to comply with their handler's requests (Billingsley, 2001; 2009). Secondly, they

take an active part in developing the tasking and the tactics that they will employ to achieve it (Hess & Amir, 2002). Thirdly, the target information that they are deployed to gather cannot be passively obtained through standard observation or electronic surveillance, otherwise, a CHIS authority would not be required (Home Office, 2018; IPCO, 2020); instead, informants must use new or established social relationships to actively obtain information from or about the person(s) of interest (Home Office, 2018). Fourthly, given their unique status as covert assets, the decision to disclose or withhold information, and the manner in which they choose to do so, is completely within their power, without the fear of any adverse consequences or legal compulsion.

Having regard to these unique situational characteristics, the informant can be re-conceptualised as an active participant in a social engagement (both with the person(s) of interest and with their handlers). Therefore, to develop a holistic informant interview model that respects the informant's active role in the relationship, it is necessary to examine the potential implications of this social context.

### **Social Memory**

Previous research, including that supposedly seeking to improve informant interviews, has focused on identifying suitable retrieval cues for autobiographical memories (i.e., Hope et al., 2019). Autobiographical memory relates to events and experiences and can be perceived as a relatively passive form of memory (Blank, 2009; Olick & Robbins, 1998); in other words, memory is formed regardless of intent. The process of forming social memory is far more active though, both in the way it is encoded and stored, and in the way it is recalled and remembered (Blank, 2009; Hills & Pachur, 2012; Olick & Robbins, 1998; Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2012). It is therefore worth considering which type of memory informant handlers will be attempting to access when interviewing an informant.

The term *social memory* is inter-disciplinary and can be applied to a wide range of research; however, at its most fundamental level, social memory refers to the formation of memory in relation to social and group dynamics (Olick & Robbins, 1998; Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2012), and can be described simply as "... recalling people we know" (Hills & Pachur, 2012, p. 218). Given that an informant will be tasked to obtain information through the exploitation of their social network, and will be providing information about their known associates (Billingsley, 2009; Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Home Office, 2018; Storm et al., 2015; Yousef & Brackin, 2010), it is plausible that such information will be stored as social memory. However, social memory is inextricably linked to self-identity (Blank, 2009; Brown et al., 2012; Olick & Robbins, 1998; Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2012). The perceived importance of a particular social group, and an individual's perceived role and status within that group, will influence how their memory is formed and encoded. Van Bavel and Cunningham were able to demonstrate this by exposing participants to images of faces, some belonging to a group they had been

assigned to (blue), and some belonging to an out-group (red). Participants paid more attention to, and had better recall for, own-group faces compared to out-group faces. However, when participants were assigned the role of a spy (i.e., they belonged to blue but had to infiltrate red), this pattern was reversed. This indicates that the process of tasking an informant, and therefore defining their self-identity as an informant, will influence both encoding and recall. Consequently, when accessing social memory, it is important not only to extract encoded details, but also to elicit details of the informants social or relational-identity (Brown et al., 2012; Echterhoff & Hirst, 2009).

This concept is elucidated by Blank (2009) who argues that stereotypes, bias and self-identity provide a cognitive schemata for memory formation that is often ignored during effortful retrieval and re-conceptualises the act of remembering as a form of behaviour. In other words, recall is a deliberate representative act regarding "... beliefs about the past" (Blank, 2009, p. 167), and is equally influenced by the intended audience and the task characteristics of remembering (Blank, 2009; Echterhoff & Hirst, 2009). This leads Blank to outline a process of remembering. Unsurprisingly, the act of remembering begins with a retrieval cue, this is followed by a validation phase, where accessed memory is converted into a belief. This belief can be influenced not only by internal factors, such as the strength of the memory trace, but also by external factors, such as inferences based on plausibility (a process that Blank argues accounts for memory conformity and suggestibility). This validation stage can also be influenced by social factors, such as the social environment, stereotypes and self-identity. The final stage of remembering is the communication stage. This stage is influenced by communicative norms, in particular the goals and purpose of remembering in light of the audience, however, there are also motivational influences; Blank argues that individuals are most often motivated to present themselves positively when communicating, highlighting a further opportunity for self-identity to play a role in the process of remembering.

The centrality of self-identity to the formation of social memory indicates that it will be necessary to engage the informant's sense of identity when accessing this type of memory. Identity is not static, but is continually re-created contingent to social context (Hargie & Dickson, 2004; Olick & Robbins, 1998) and the means for identity creation is narration (Delgado & Escalas, 2004; Massa & Simeoni, 2014; Olick & Robbins, 1998). Importantly, narrative storytelling also has mnemonic benefits. Story schemas assist both the encoding of memory, giving primacy to story consistent details, and retrieval, providing a framework to reconstruct an event (Delgado & Escalas, 2004; McGregor & Holmes, 1999). Narration adds meaning to an individual's experience, making it more relevant and memorable (McGregor & Holmes, 1999), and has been described as an "... essential support for memory" (Massa & Simeoni, 2014, p. 81). A series of experiments conducted by McGregor and Holmes (1999) examined the use of stories as a memory retrieval technique. In one of the experiments, they found that, even after a 40-week interval, participants were still able to recall gist summaries of the story, although

memory for specific facts was almost completely erased. Crucially, stories are perceived as the best method to describe interpersonal relationships (Massa & Simeoni, 2014), and therefore provide a suitable schema for the elicitation of social memory.

Hope et al. (2019) appear to dismiss the importance of narrative in relation to cued retrieval, however, given that informants are tasked to adopt a specific social role and are expected to gather and communicate social memories about their known associates, the use of narration may well be an effective and naturalistic technique for enhancing informant recall. The retrieval cues employed when accessing social memory may also vary from those used to access autobiographical memory. Hills and Pachur (2012) recognise that recall occurs in clusters, and that the clusters accessed via social memory may not overlap with those usually accessed autobiographically. They identify three factors that are likely to influence social memory recall: categorical, associative and frequency. They demonstrated that on a social memory recall test (how many people do you know) each of these factors interacted, however, memory search tended to progress from a global cue based on frequency (i.e., the person the recaller has most contact with) followed by a local cue based on association or category (i.e., people who regularly associate with the previously recalled person), consequently, clusters of recall were based on social relations. This indicates that retrieval of social information may not benefit from a chronological or thematic approach to elicitation, but that a relational approach may be more beneficial.

### **Social Theories of Deception**

Broadly speaking, academic researchers espouse the cognitive approach (increasing cognitive load on the interviewee) when attempting to detect HUMINT deception (Leins et al., 2012; Shaw, et al., 2014; Vrij, 2014; Vrij et al., 2017; Vrij & Granhag, 2014; Vrij et al., 2014; Vrij, 2014). However, rather than relying on the academically acclaimed and extensively recommended cognitive approach, Counter-Terrorism police have reported using the polygraph on their informants (Wilford, 2017). The polygraph is widely criticised by the academic community as lacking scientific rigour and empirical support (Howitt, 2009; Iacono, 2008; 2012; Vrij, 2008) and the fact that the polygraph is the preferred technique for detecting informant deceit may indicate that practitioners find alternative techniques (such as the cognitive approach) unsuitable for their purposes.

When considering the situational dilemma of an informant though, it may well be that neither approach is appropriate. The cognitive approach is concerned with eliciting and observing presumed cues to deceit, however, DePaulo et al. (2003) found that different situations produce different deception cues, and lies that do not concern a personal transgression rarely produce observable cues of deceit. Given that a deceitful informant will be providing an account about the transgressions of a person of interest (rather than themselves), employing cognitive load techniques designed to elicit observable cues

may not be the most successful strategy. Likewise with the polygraph. Physiological cues are presumed to be the result of arousal, caused by guilt, fear or the excitement of telling a successful lie (Vrij, 2008), and it is the role of the polygrapher to generate arousal by successfully inducing a sense of fear and futility in the interviewee (Howitt, 2009; Iacono, 2012). However, the lie itself will still not relate to a personal transgression, and the covert status of the informant will likely protect them from prosecution, consequently, an informant is unlikely to experience the levels of concern required for a successful concern-based polygraph examination.

It is also worth considering the unique relationship between a handler and their informant. Dabney and Tewksbury (2016) conducted an observational study of interactions between police officers and their informants and noted that despite the handler working for a governmental agency, the informant is in a position of power by virtue of the information they possess. Additionally, unlike many custodial settings, the interaction between handler and informant is both voluntary and confidential (ACPO, 2007; Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Home Office, 2018). Consequently, the handler is not in a position to compel the source to disclose any information they wish to withhold (Kleinman, 2006b). Therefore, handlers need to build and maintain lasting, long-term rapport, in order to elicit co-operation and information (Nunan et al., 2020a; Stanier & Nunan, 2021) - something that results in a relatively informal interaction (Schirman, 2014; Storm et al., 2015; Yousef & Brackin, 2010). There are other theories though, such as Self-Presentational Perspective (SPP; DePaulo et al, 2003) and Interpersonal Deception Theory (IDT; Burgoon & Buller, 1994) which specifically consider the social and interpersonal aspects of deception.

SPP acknowledges the ubiquity of deception across social situations, and highlights the fact that whilst lies can be motivated by a number of factors (i.e., material gain, punishment avoidance etc.) most socially constructed lies are psychologically motivated; they are designed to enhance how the deceiver is perceived. Social deception then, regardless of whether it be a high stakes deception or a minor lie, involves the deceiver presenting a false version of themselves; as DePaulo et al. (2003) summarise, "... the realm of lying ... is one in which identities are claimed and impressions are managed" (p. 76). Indeed, within this context, a high-stakes lie would be one which, if uncovered, would damage the deceiver's identity and reputation. Despite highlighting the centrality of identity management to deception, DePaulo et al. (2003) then proceed to consider how a deceiver's self-presentation dilemma might affect observable cues to deception. They note that both liars and truth-tellers present themselves as being honest, the difference being that liars know this to be false. According to DePaulo et al. (2003), this discrepancy impacts deceivers in two ways: firstly, liars will be less forthcoming and less compelling than truth-tellers, because they lack the moral authority, experiential knowledge and emotional context of the lie; secondly, liars will be more deliberate in their self-presentations, because they do not take their credibility for granted. One method of minimising these effects would be for deceivers to rely on 'scripts' (DePaulo, et

al., 2003), which would reduce the requirement for improvisation when relating an account. The self-presentational perspective proposed by DePaulo et al. (2003) therefore predicts that the ubiquity of practiced deception and the availability of deceptive schema would result in minimal cues to deceit, something which they were able to demonstrate by conducting a meta-analysis on 120 data samples. Most of these samples examined social (rather than forensic / criminal) deception; in other words, lies that do not pertain to a personal transgression and would not impact upon public reputation. These are the exact kind of lies that an informant can be expected to tell.

IDT also acknowledges that deceivers will attempt to manage the impression they leave on their listeners, and highlights their strategic awareness, arguing that "... virtually all social interaction episodes can be characterized as purposive and goal-directed" (Burgoon et al., 2000, p. 108). Within IDT, deception is a motivated and strategic act, however, whilst deceivers may be conscious of their strategic aims, the act of deception may still prompt sub-conscious arousal, which may provide potential cues to deceit. This results in a feedback loop between deceiver and receiver; as the deceiver leaks cues to deceit, the receiver signals suspicion, causing the deceiver to increase their conscious attempts to appear credible (Burgoon & Buller, 1994; Burgoon et al., 1999). Consequently, the more motivated the deceiver, the more successful they become (Burgoon & Floyd, 2000). As with SPP though, despite an emphasis on impression management and social interaction, IDT research continued to focus on presumed cues to deceit. However, more recent research suggests that sub-conscious arousal may be more evident in a deceiver's linguistic approach to deceit (i.e., Dilman, 2009; Geurts et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2013). Of particular relevance, given the presumed importance of identity management, was the finding by Taylor et al. that personal pronoun use was affected by deceit (*we* became *I*), indicating that self-identity, at least in relation to group membership, is influenced by deceptive or malicious intent.

In summary, although both SPP and IDT still attend to supposedly observable cues of deceit, a combined reading of them predicts that how an interviewee verbally presents themselves, and their self-identity, within the context of a social interaction could be indicative of deception. Consequently, rather than focusing on supposed cues to deceit, handlers may be better advised to attend to the verbal content of the communication and the identity role adopted by their informant.

### **The Social Context of an Informant Interview**

A social interaction can be envisaged as fulfilling two functions, one practical and one psychological. Practically, the interaction can be viewed as an exchange of information, however, from a psychological perspective, the interaction allows participants to project a positive self-identity (Hargie & Dickson, 2004). It can be envisaged that an interaction can fulfil either or both of these functions, and that they could each be fulfilled either independently, or inter-dependently. For example, IDT predicts

that the content of the communication will directly influence how the communicator presents themselves, with deceivers making conscious and strategic efforts to manage how they are perceived (Burgoon & Buller, 1994; Burgoon et al., 1999). It is therefore worth considering which strategies an informant, as a social interactant, may adopt to transmit information and project a positive self-identity.

Informants can be summarised as any person who provides information about the actions or intentions of someone other than themselves to any governmental agency with the expectation of confidentiality (ACPO, 2007; Home Office, 2018), or more simply put, they will be secretly talking about someone they know. This definition is remarkably similar to the academic concept of gossip. Gossip has been defined as an "... exchange of information about absent third parties" (Foster, 2004, p. 81), or information "... concerning the personal matters of a third person who is not present" (Wert & Salovey, 2004, p. 122), whilst such communications are often done covertly (Foster, 2004). However, despite the negative connotations associated with gossip, Feinberg, et al. (2012) observe that such negative communication can often have a prosocial motivation, and that gossip can be used as a means of regulating behaviour within communities. It is clear from such definitions that the academic conceptualisation of gossip reflects the situational dilemma of an informant providing information about criminal associates to their handler. Gossip itself is a form of narrative (McAndrew & Milenkovic, 2002), and given the similarity between the definition of gossip and that of an informant, there are several reasons for hypothesising that an informant may naturally engage in a gossip narrative.

Firstly, gossip is believed to be evolved behaviour which is both familiar and ubiquitous (Dunbar, 2004; Foster, 2004; McAndrew & Milenkovic, 2002) and may account for more than 60% of all conversations (Wert & Salovey, 2004). Secondly, the underlying motives for gossip may well align with those of an informant. For example, informants report being motivated by a disliking of certain criminal behaviours (Billingsley, 2001), which is similar to the pro-social motivation of gossip, as a means of protecting vulnerable members of society from other less scrupulous individuals (Dunbar, 2004; Feinberg et al., 2012; McAndrew & Milenkovic, 2002). Gossip can also be selfishly motivated, and used to improve the gossiper's own personal situation or opportunities (McAndrew & Milenkovic, 2002; Wert & Salovey, 2004); this is similar to other reported informant motivations, such as revenge, removing competition and financial gain (Billingsley, 2001). Gossip can also be viewed as *currency* with its value being defined by "... timeliness, usefulness, and, especially, rarity" (Foster, 2004, p. 84) – an observation which could be equally applied to HUMINT, (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002; Schirman, 2014; Storm et al., 2015).

Furthermore, Foster (2004) identifies four strategic functions of gossip, which appear to mirror informant objectives. The first function is the provision of information; most informants engage with their handlers voluntarily, and cannot be compelled to speak, therefore, there is an expectation that they will actively provide their handler with some form of information (Billingsley, 2001; Home Office, 2018;

Miller, 2011), and gossip is recognised as an effective, and often the only available, method of transmitting social information (Foster, 2004). Gossip is also recognised as being entertaining (Foster, 2004), and whilst informants are unlikely to view meeting their handlers as a form of entertainment (Miller, 2011) a number of them clearly do enjoy the relationship (Hess & Amir, 2002; Storm et al., 2015; Yousef & Brackin, 2010); it should also be remembered that many informants are enveloped within a criminal fraternity (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016), so meeting their handlers may be the only opportunity they have to gossip about their underworld associates. The third function of gossip identified by Foster, is that of friendship. Handlers recognise the importance of building rapport (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Nunan et al., 2020a; Henry et al., 2019; Stanier & Nunan, 2021) and informants also seem to acknowledge the benefits of developing a friendly relationship (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002). Finally, gossip is able to influence the behaviour of others (Foster, 2004). By gaining social consensus and influencing the way other group members behave towards certain associates, gossip provides a means of punishing the anti-social behaviour of targeted individuals without the need for direct confrontation (Dunbar, 2004; Feinberg, Willer, Stellar, & Keltner, 2012; Foster, 2004; McAndrew & Milenkovic, 2002). Influencing law enforcement agencies to act on their information is clearly a motivation for informants (Billingsley, 2001), and even those selfishly motivated by financial gain are often only rewarded as and when their information has proven correct (Billingsley, 2001).

Gossip, therefore, aligns with a number of informant motivations and objectives, consequently, it can be envisaged that informants will naturally produce a gossip narrative, and that they will use this narrative to both effectively communicate information and project a positive self-identity, especially in contrast to their associates, who they are gossiping about.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

Much of the extant HUMINT research has been dominated by a concept of human sources of information as partially resistant, probably detained, passive custodians of information; however, this is not consistent with the legal and operational context of an informant. Re-conceptualising the informant as a social entity therefore presents new opportunities for research that have previously been neglected. Two core areas of previous HUMINT research have been *information elicitation* and *detecting deception* (Vrij & Granhag, 2014), however, by re-considering the social context of both memory and deception it is possible to envisage other methods of achieving these objectives. Two concepts that dominate social interpretations of both memory and deception are those of narrative and self-identity, and by recognising the situational dilemma of an informant as being akin to that of a gossip, it is foreseeable that informants might adopt a gossip narrative to communicate both information and identity.

Recognising informants as peer-status social interactants has clear implications for the development of an informant interview model. In particular, the informant's personal agenda and relationship with the handler are likely to impact the success of any subsequent engagement. This will result in a number of relational objectives for any informant interviewer; these will be considered in the next chapter.

## Chapter 4<sup>2</sup>

### Relational Objectives of an Informant Interview

#### Chapter Summary

Allegations of mistreatment at U.S. military detention centres such as Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay have provided an impetus for recent academic research, often focusing on HUMINT situations in relation to custodial detainees (Alison & Alison, 2017; Barela & Ohlin, 2020; Brandon, 2014). However, the psychological situation of a non-custodial informant is likely to be very different from that of a detained enemy combatant (Kleinman, 2006b); specifically, informants will be voluntarily engaging in a co-operative relationship with their handlers, and will be interviewed in a location from which they are free to leave (Kleinman, 2006b; Storm et al., 2015; Yousef & Brackin, 2010). Consequently, interview models that are effective within a custodial environment may be less effective in a non-custodial setting, where relational objectives – such as building and maintaining rapport (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Stanier & Nunan, 2021) or gaining informant co-operation (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016) – will need to be considered.

Therefore, the current chapter will consider the extant literature pertaining to three areas of previous HUMINT research that are likely to be influenced by the informant's personal circumstances, and which can be conceived as the relational objectives of an informant interview: (i) understanding source motivation; (ii) building rapport; and, (iii) gaining co-operation.

#### Source Motivation

The benefits of handling an informant are obvious - they provide law enforcement agencies with access to information that would otherwise be inaccessible (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002; Miller, 2011). However, they also come at a cost. For example, Miller (2011) observes that informants are often in a unique position to cause reputational damage to law enforcement agencies, through the provision of false information or 'double dealing' (Miller, 2011), whilst Dabney and Tewksbury (2016) recognise the risk to the personal and professional lives of informant handlers, especially noting the temptation to form a personal relationship beyond the acceptable boundaries of an

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<sup>2</sup> Elements of this chapter were included in the below publication. The present author was the sole author of all material included in this chapter from this publication: Oxburgh, G.E., Gabbert, F., & Moffett, L. (in press). The use of empathy and rapport during interviews & interrogations. In, G.E. Oxburgh, T. Myklebust, M. Fallon, and M. Hartwig (Eds.), *Interviewing and interrogation: A review of research and practice since World War II*. To be published by Torkel Opsahl Academic EPublisher in 2022

“... exchange-based interaction” (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016, p. 186). Ultimately, Dabney and Tewksbury conclude that, whilst the negative aspects of informant handling are “... perceived as bothersome, intrusive, and potentially danger producing, [they] are worth it, although frequently only ‘just barely’” (p. 187). Therefore, to mitigate against these risks, handlers are encouraged to understand their informant’s motivation (Billingsley, 2001; 2009; Miller, 2011).

The risks of informing on known associates are very real, and a series of high profile informant murders prompted Dodge (2006) to study the motivation of juvenile informants in particular; specifically, whether they undertake their role with informed consent. Dodge identifies that informants can be motivated by a number of factors, and lists financial motivations, revenge, egocentrism and eccentricity as possible motives. She speculates that juveniles undoubtedly share similar motivations, but that they may lack the maturity required to fully understand the risks involved. Dodge recognises that, in the U.S at least, informants are often presented with a difficult dilemma, whereby, having been arrested for their involvement in an offence, they could either face criminal charges and the prospect of incarceration, or they could volunteer to be a confidential informant. Both alternatives inspire fear; the dilemma is therefore to balance that fear, and decide which course of action presents the least amount of risk.

Miller (2011) also found fear to be an overriding informant motivation. He focused his study on five southern U.S. states and was able to recruit a sample of eighty-four informants, all of which had assisted drug related investigations and were referred to the study by their police handlers. Like Dodge (2006), Miller found that the majority agreed to become informants following arrest. Often, especially for those unused to being arrested, the decision to work as an informant was made in response to their immediate situation, and was viewed as an opportunity to relieve the anxiety caused by arrest and the prospect of imprisonment; ultimately, the decision was ‘fear-driven’ (Miller, 2011). This was often a direct result of the tactics employed by law enforcement officers, presenting an exaggerated threat of imprisonment countered by promises of leniency if they agreed to co-operate, and forcing them to make a quick decision. Consequently, most participants stated that the hope of leniency was their initial motivation. However, there were other reasons for becoming an informant. Like the desire for leniency, some of these motivations could be seen as hasty, fear driven decisions, with participants reporting that they worried about the repercussions of a criminal conviction on their current or future employment, or the embarrassment it would likely cause their friends and family. However, more experienced criminals claimed to have made the decision based upon a rationalisation of their predicament; they knew what to expect and what benefits they could negotiate in exchange for their co-operation. Miller concludes that the process of recruiting and managing informants is “... full of moral ambiguity and duplicity” (p. 216), and that law enforcement officers often deceive potential informants in order to gain their co-operation. Additionally, the informants themselves recognise this, and come to resent the officers who manipulated them into what they perceive as an undesirable and unpleasant transactional relationship.

Dabney and Tewksbury (2016) conducted a longitudinal study to determine the impact informants have upon law enforcement investigations within two metropolitan districts in the U.S. Whilst accepting that there may be altruistic motivations for passing information to law enforcement officers, Dabney and Tewksbury come to define informants as belonging to one of two motivational categories; either self-preservation or self-advancement. They state that there are various motivating factors within these two broad categories, but that these can generally be summed up as fear, financial or revenge; with fear of future criminal proceedings being the main factor, resulting in what Dabney and Tewksbury refer to as an 'indentured informant'.

It is conceivable that the legislative environment in England and Wales will reduce the likelihood of informants being motivated by fear; for example, the provision of a DSU for handling and managing informants (ACPO, 2007; IPCO, 2020), means that officers dealing with potential informants at an investigative level, and therefore in a position to influence any judicial disposal, will not become their handlers (Billingsley, 2009). Consequently, the situation of *indentured informants* or a *hammered* source, described as the most common example of an informant in the U.S. (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Miller, 2011), is less likely to exist. This is evidenced by a UK study conducted by Billingsley (2001). He obtained a sample of one-hundred and twenty informants and found that the vast majority were motivated to begin informing by the prospect of financial gain, with almost double the number of participants self-reporting a financial motive than the next most popular category. Overall, participants reported thirteen different motives for beginning their career as a police informant, but the top four reasons accounted for two-thirds of all participants (80 / 120). These four categories were: financial (32); dislikes the particular crime (17); reduced sentence (16); and revenge (15). In stark contrast to Miller's (2011) findings from the U.S., only four participants reported their initial reason for informing as 'police pressure'.

However, Dabney and Tewksbury (2016) observe a shift in motivation as the relationship between handler and informant evolves. They found that handlers came to provide their informants with insight into, and access to, a mainstream lifestyle and services, resulting in some informants viewing their handlers as both role models and friends. Dabney and Tewksbury observed that, "... the idea of knowing one's confidential informants on a personal level can also be important for knowing how to best motivate and reward them" (p. 118). This can be conceived as a motivational loop: initial motivations prompt an informant-handler relationship; this allows the handler to become a positive role-model; this results in an even deeper, more mutually dependent relationship. Billingsley (2001) specifically examined how informant motives alter over time; he found that within five years of becoming an informant, 93% who had initially been motivated by revenge, and 62% of those who had originally sought a reduced sentence, had changed their primary motivation. Whilst the majority of those who had begun informing to obtain a reduced sentence shifted towards a financial motivation, some of those who had initially sought revenge were, after five years, motivated by enjoyment, or because they

disliked the particular crime that they were informing about (Billingsley, 2001). Amongst financially motivated informants, 22% reported a change in motivation, with all of them saying that, after five years, they enjoyed the work. Only 12% of those who disliked the crime changed their motivation, and this was towards financial incentives (Billingsley, 2001). Interestingly, Billingsley speculates that the relative stability of financially motivated informants, and the shift within other categories towards a financial motive, may be attributable to handler's behaviour. He notes that a performance culture incentivises handlers to reward their informant's financially, potentially causing their informants to become financially dependent upon their handlers.

It could be argued that this is a positive, perhaps even calculated, interference by the handlers; making informants financially dependent may be an ideal way to ensure long term control. However, there are dangers with a financially motivated informant. Dabney and Tewksbury (2016) found that the practitioners they encountered were reluctant to trust a financially motivated informant, and a quote from one of Billingsley's (2001) own respondents may indicate why: "... if you need money like I do, you have to come up with good information" (p. 86). The handlers in Dabney and Tewksbury's study may be quick to point out that good information is not always the same as accurate information. Indeed, whilst *revenge* featured as an informant motivation across studies (Billingsley, 2001; Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Dodge, 2006; Miller, 2011), perhaps unsurprisingly, revenge towards the authorities was not reported as a motivating factor. However, there was acknowledgement that such motives exist; as one informant stated, "... I do it because crime is wrong. But there are devious reasons why some people inform" (Miller, 2011, p. 87). One of Dabney and Tewksbury's interviewees made a similar observation: "... It is well known that these sorts of double-agent, mercenary, and vengeful informants exist across the modern urban landscape" (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016, p. 40). It can therefore be seen that, whilst it is acknowledged that an informant's access to valuable criminal intelligence is their primary recommending feature (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Dodge, 2006; Hess & Amir, 2002), different motivating factors are viewed with differing levels of desirability and suspicion. As one U.S police officer stated, the best informants are "... the ones not motivated by personal gain. They're doing it because they see it as the right thing to do" (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016, p. 40).

It can be seen then that understanding the motivation of an individual informant is crucial for assessing risk – at both a personal and organisational level. However, there is also an acknowledgement that motivations can and do change over time, and that handler behaviour can influence these changes. It is therefore imperative that a bespoke informant interview model provides opportunities for handlers not only to discern their informant's current motivation, but also to inspire more pro-social ones. One potential method of achieving this goal, which has been identified by numerous HUMINT researchers, is for handlers to develop and maintain rapport with their informants.

## **Rapport**

As already noted in Chapters One and Two, rapport-based interviewing is increasingly recognised as an ethical means of conducting an investigative interview (CoP, 2019; APT, 2021; MoJ, 2022). Consequently, any bespoke informant interview model will need to incorporate rapport into its design. Across the HUMINT literature three themes emerge in relation to rapport: (i) ambiguities surrounding its definition; (ii) its importance to HUMINT practitioners; (iii) its supposed function within a HUMINT interview. This section will therefore explore each theme and how they interact in an informant scenario.

### ***Defining Rapport***

Neuman and Salinas-Serrano (2006) note that rapport can mean different things to different people, making it difficult to define. For instance, Royal and Schutt (1976) listed several techniques for establishing rapport, which included beginning the conversation with a topic that is of interest to the interviewee, appearing interested and sympathetic towards whatever the interviewee has to say, keeping the discussion informal, displaying positive emotional responses without appearing suspicious and, importantly, not moving onto the actual interviewing phase until the interviewee appears friendly and co-operative. Other commentators advise the opposite approach though, emphasising the importance of maintaining a professional distance, appearing firm, and establishing authority by insisting that the interviewee addresses the interviewer using a title, such as mister, whilst the interviewer should address the interviewee by their first name (Neuman & Salinas-Serrano, 2006).

Therefore, in order to better understand the concept of rapport, there may be some benefit in exploring certain constructs that do not constitute rapport. For example, empathy and trust are deemed to be psychologically different from rapport (Gabbert et al., 2021). This becomes evident when the concept of empathy is further explored. Empathy is described as a personal inference that “... an underlying emotion ... has not been fully expressed” (Oxburgh et al., 2012), and it can be seen from this definition that, whilst empathy can be expressed externally (Oxburgh et al., 2014), empathy itself is experienced internally. Similarly for trust: whilst it is possible to express trust, it is also possible for one person to trust another without being trusted in return. Likewise, it is possible to be empathetic without receiving any reciprocal empathy. Indeed, it is even possible to trust and / or empathise with a person without ever actually meeting them. This is not the case with rapport; rapport is experienced at the interpersonal level (Gabbert et al., 2021). Notwithstanding this relational quality of rapport, expressions of both empathy and trust can still be used to facilitate it (Alison et al., 2013; Gabbert et al., 2021; Nunan

et al., 2020a). Thus, rapport exists as a component of an interpersonal interaction, and serves the purpose of minimising conflict and promoting shared understanding.

The fact that rapport serves a function within a particular interaction or relationship perhaps explains the discrepancies amongst researchers when attempting to define it (Gabbert et al., 2021); ultimately, what constitutes sufficient and appropriate rapport in one interpersonal context is different from sufficient and appropriate rapport in another (Gabbert et al., 2021). For example, the level of rapport required to engender a sufficient sense of autonomy for a suspect or witness to provide an account of a criminal incident, may not be sufficient to engender the additional sense of equality that an informant may require to recognise shared interests with their handlers (Shapiro, 2006). Indeed, informants need to feel sufficient autonomy not only to provide information, but also to conduct tasking in order to gather target information and may therefore require an almost peer sense of equality with their handler (Hess & Amir, 2002), something that is unlikely to be established within an investigative interview. Hence, behaviours that are suitable for establishing rapport in an investigative interview may not be relevant or even practical in an informant interaction. It is therefore important to understand how practitioners define rapport. Nunan et al. (2020a) specifically asked informant handlers for their definition, and three subthemes emerged: (i) that rapport entails the identification of common ground and establishment of trust; (ii) rapport involves a reciprocal relationship, and; (iii) that the relationship must be based on a professional footing. This perhaps adds weight to Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, and May's (2020) definition of rapport, which emphasises a working relationship based on an understanding of motivation and informant welfare. According to these definitions, rapport, at least within the context of an informant interaction, is long-term and relational. Whether different levels of rapport require different interpersonal skills at different stages of the relationship remains to be explored.

### ***The Importance of Rapport***

The importance of rapport within the realm of intelligence interviewing is regularly re-affirmed by HUMINT practitioners. For example, when Redlich et al. (2014) asked federal-level interviewers in the U.S. to report their perceived effectiveness of different interview techniques, four of the top five reported techniques came from the *rapport and relationship building* domain. When asked to consider alternative interview objectives, techniques associated to *rapport and relationship building* were perceived as more effective when gathering intelligence than in other interview scenarios. Russano et al. (2014a) made a similar finding, with practitioners reporting that rapport is a critical factor in the eventual success of an intelligence interview. However, Russano et al. (2014a) concluded that "... although interrogators recognize and emphasize the value of rapport, there is less consensus on how it might be defined, achieved, or identified" (p. 851).

Surveys of informant handlers in the UK confirm the perceived importance of rapport (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Nunan et al., 2020a). However, the function of rapport within a handler-informant relationship remains unclear. Birkett and Pike conducted a survey of five handlers from the National Crime Agency (NCA) and found that rapport played a fundamental part in building and maintaining the relationship with the informant throughout their lifecycle. However, Nunan et al. (2020a) interviewed a different sample of practitioners, specifically 24 informant handlers in England and Wales engaged in counter-terrorism investigations. They asked a series of eight directed questions relating to rapport, and found that rapport was perceived as an important component in the gathering of information.

Following their survey, Nunan et al. (2020a) identified several themes. Firstly, participants reported that rapport was essential for obtaining information over the entirety of an informant relationship, which is generally lengthier than that formed between investigators in other similar forensic interviews. Secondly, they found that rapport is a specific concept within the context of an informant meeting, and should therefore be specifically defined within that context. When asked how they are able to recognise when rapport has been established, participants again linked rapport to intelligence gain, stating that the accomplishment of tasks and reporting of both high quantity and high quality information was indicative that a handler had a good rapport based relationship with their informant (Nunan et al., 2020a). Some participants extended this concept further, by observing that rapport results not only in operational information but also personal information, with personal disclosure being a further indicator of rapport. When asked about the ability to train rapport building techniques, the majority of respondents seemed to imply that there may be varying levels of innate ability, linked to interpersonal skills, but that this could be enhanced through training. The themes identified by Nunan et al. find support in a systematic review conducted by Gabbert et al. (2021) examining the use of rapport in information-gathering contexts, which highlights the importance of context when seeking to understand rapport. Gabbert et al. found that, within a professional context, rapport performs three separate functions for the interviewer, who can: (i) personalise the interview; (ii) present an approachable demeanour; (iii) demonstrate attentiveness. They also found that 32 of the 35 studies included in the meta-analysis reported that rapport increased the amount of information disclosed by the interviewee.

Overall, the study conducted by Nunan et al. (2020a), which involves a substantial sample of practitioners in England and Wales, adds support to the perceived importance of rapport in a HUMINT context, although there is divergence around how rapport might be established. Nunan et al.'s sample highlight the importance of effective communication, with participants reporting that good interpersonal skills, including communicative flexibility and active listening, were vital to establishing rapport. A consideration of the informant's welfare and a demonstration of empathy was another theme that emerged from the sample, with practitioners stating that they are able to build effective rapport by demonstrating a genuine interest in their informant and the things that concern them (Nunan et al., 2020a).

The five handlers interviewed by Birkett and Pike (2017) also recognise the importance of adopting a friendly approach and expressing empathy. Some participants stated that they would alter their own personality or profile in order to emphasise similarities, or present themselves as having things in common with the informant (Birkett & Pike, 2017). Other approaches to rapport building included the use of flattery, humour, the use of ‘banter’ and encouraging a ‘team ethic’ (Birkett & Pike, 2017). Adapting or altering your own profile may be a controversial tactic for handlers to adopt, with participants in Russano et al.’s (2014b) survey reporting that being disingenuous and trying too hard to become an informant’s friend were amongst the least effective ways of establishing rapport. However, intelligence professionals in the U.S. also recognised the importance of treating the informant humanely and finding areas of commonality (Russano et al., 2014b).

Taken as a body of research, it is clear that there is consensus amongst practitioners that rapport is important within HUMINT. However, the function of rapport remains unclear. There is a repeated assertion that rapport is fundamental to intelligence gain (Gabbert et al., 2021; Nunan et al., 2020a), indicating that the elicitation of information is part of a process, and that establishing rapport is a foundational stage within that process. Other researchers suggest that rapport is a function of forming a collaborative relationship with an informant (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Hess & Amir, 2002). It is therefore worth examining these potential functions in greater depth.

### ***The Function of Rapport***

Despite being a rapport-based interview model, the PEACE model adopts a rather goal-oriented interpretation of rapport. Within the *engage and explain* phase of the model rapport is conceived as a means of ensuring the procedure of the interview is adhered to, by outlining objectives and expectations at the outset (CoP, 2020). However, researchers have found that investigative interviewers following the PEACE protocol have been able to utilise rapport throughout the interview to improve information yield. For example, Alison et al. (2013; 2014) developed a scientific tool for measuring rapport which they used to examine a series of suspect interviews. They note that prior research has generated ‘task lists’ to be incorporated in investigative interviews, but that these tasks are often either poorly defined or overly specific; consequently, the concept of rapport is also poorly defined. They noted that there are parallels between investigative interviews and the Motivational Interview (MI). MI is a technique utilised in clinical psychology to motivate behavioural change and, as with an investigative interview, the interviewer seeks to establish an “... empathic, respectful, and nonjudgmental atmosphere” (Alison et al., 2013, p.412), with the interviewer adopting a flexible but goal-oriented approach. However, the MI does not propose a list of strategies or tactics to be adhered to, but emphasises the ‘spirit’ of the approach, focusing on creating an atmosphere of collaboration over confrontation, and maintaining the

interviewee's autonomy rather than imposing the interviewer's authority. Alison et al. (2013) noted that law enforcement interviewers are advised to follow a similar approach by using open questions, being non-judgmental, empathic, goal directed and responding flexibly to the interviewee's responses through active listening.

However, Alison et al. (2013) note that "... rapport building is unlikely to be appropriate or productive for every phase of the suspect interview" (p. 413) and so turned to the Interpersonal Behaviour Circle (IBC) as a means of measuring the overall essence of an interaction. According to the IBC model, first proposed by Leary and Coffey in 1954 (cited by Alison et al., 2013; 2014), personality is not fixed or isolated, but should be considered within the context of how people interact with each other. Alison and colleagues therefore sought to combine the ethos of MI and IBC theory to build a model that could measure and analyse rapport throughout the course of an investigative interview (Alison et al., 2013; 2014). The result is the ORBIT model (Observing Rapport-Based Interview Techniques), which is designed to examine rapport at a macro-level, taking a holistic approach to look at the overall style and atmosphere of the interview, rather than relying on the presence or absence of a prescriptive list of techniques presumed to enhance rapport. Findings indicated that interviewers employed rapport building and positive interpersonal behaviour throughout the interview process, and that an adaptive interpersonal technique resulted in more information being disclosed by the suspect.

Collins and Carthy (2019) criticise the ORBIT model as being difficult to apply and, having been taken directly from the counselling literature, lacks specificity within the context of an investigative interview. To counter this, Collins and Carthy adapt a simpler model, first proposed by Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990), and incorporate a series of verbal indicators into a model of rapport consisting of three overarching components: attention, positivity and coordination. This is the model that was utilised by Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, and May (2020) in the only study to date measuring the impact of rapport on intelligence yield in informant interviews. Results confirm findings from investigative interviews, namely, that an increase in rapport consistent behaviours produce greater intelligence yield (Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, & May, 2020; Gabbert, et al., 2021). However, this may be an over-simplification of the role rapport plays in an informant-handler relationship. Whilst Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, and May examined 105 audio recordings of actual informant interviews, these were taken from a limited sample of seven informant-handler dyads. Consequently, there could be other factors, such as length of relationship, access to information and even importance of the tasks undertaken (none of which were reported) that could potentially influence both rapport and intelligence yield. Indeed, within the context of an informant interview the relationship between intelligence and rapport may actually occur in the opposite direction; for example, if an informant has successfully completed their tasks and attends the meeting with a wealth of intelligence, then the handler may react positively and express more rapport consistent behaviours.

In these circumstances, the function of rapport is less about the elicitation of intelligence, and more about the maintenance of a long term collaborative relationship (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Hess & Amir, 2002). This function of rapport has been recognised by HUMINT researchers (Coulam, 2013; Kleinman, 2006a), and is even noted by Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, and May (2020) when they define rapport as "... developing and maintaining a working relationship with a human source, by managing their motivations and welfare, whilst ensuring they understand the purpose of the relationship in order to secure reliable intelligence" (p.3). However, whilst the relational function of rapport is recognised, researchers have so far been limited to proposing methods of building relational rapport based upon theories taken from other research areas, such as negotiation theory (Shapiro, 2006) and sales and marketing (Borum, 2006). Again, there is some support from practitioner surveys (Nunan et al., 2020a) that handlers do use persuasive techniques taken from sales (Cialdini, 2001; 2009) as a means of establishing collaborative rapport.

Overall then, the function of rapport in informant interactions is unclear. Rapport has been shown to increase intelligence yield in investigative interviews (Alison et al., 2013; Alison et al., 2014; Gabbert et al., 2021), and there is tentative support for this in an informant context (Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, & May, 2020); however, there is acknowledgment that rapport may serve a more relational function within an informant scenario, and there is anecdotal evidence from practitioner surveys that this is the case (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Nunan et al., 2020a). Consequently, rather than simply serving to facilitate specific interview objectives (i.e., information gathering), rapport may play a broader role within an informant interaction, to establish and maintain an ongoing collaborative relationship.

### **Gaining a Co-operative Relationship**

The relationship between handler and informant is a unique one, in as much that the informant is considered a valuable asset to the law enforcement agency (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002), thereby imbuing the informant with a degree of power in their relations with the handler. Perhaps more galling for the law enforcement handler, is that the informant's value is a direct result of their criminal lifestyle and network of criminal associates (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002). As Dabney and Tewksbury observed, many law enforcement officers find this juxtaposition between criminality and investigative value troubling, and are reluctant to work with informants; of those that do work with them, many treat them with thinly veiled contempt and disdain. However, there is the clear impression, even within the cultural context of U.S. street level law enforcement, that those officers who cultivate a long-term collaborative relationship with their informants benefit from their personal investment. For instance, Dabney and Tewksbury repeatedly return to the example of one particular officer, Justin, who would consistently demonstrate an interest in his informant's welfare and personal

circumstances without any obvious or tangible return for his efforts. However, it seemed clear from the examples cited, that Justin purposely maintained long term relationships with his informants which, as far as Justin was concerned, paid dividends later on when he needed information from them.

Having observed Israeli HUMINT practitioners, both Coulam (2013) and Hess and Amir (2002) develop this theme, expounding the benefits of establishing a co-operative relationship based on mutual trust. However, neither are able to offer any advice on how such co-operation can be achieved; indeed, even Dabney and Tewksbury (2016) observe that "... there is no formal written resource or training manual on how to turn an informant, and police departments, training academies, and even academics have long viewed this process as something that simply happens, although the mechanics of how it happens have been neglected" (p. 68). Although there is no specific research conducted on how a handler might be able to engineer a co-operative relationship with an informant, HUMINT researchers have proposed a number of theoretical models and techniques that could be incorporated into a bespoke informant interview model. The first of these is taken from research regarding negotiation theory.

### ***Negotiation Theory***

Shapiro (2006) observes that lessons from negotiation theory may be transferrable to HUMINT. In his conceptualisation of the dilemma facing a handler, the informant is in possession of something (i.e., information) that the handler wants, and it is the handler's goal to convince the informant that it is in their own best interests to part with that information. For Shapiro, this situation is not unlike a negotiation, consequently, the techniques developed as part of negotiation theory may be applicable to HUMINT.

The first aspect of negotiation theory, which Shapiro (2006) believes may be of benefit to handlers, is learning to 'expand the pie'. This is a reference to a previously held assumption that negotiations are conducted over a *fixed pie*, whereby one party's gain meant another party's loss. Consequently, the negotiation was a means of deciding how the pie ought to be divided. However, this assumption was challenged in the early 1990's when negotiation theorists recognised the potential for mutual gains, that is, areas where both parties are able to gain an advantage without causing a loss to their opposite number. Shapiro notes that a focus on obtaining mutual gains increases co-operation between individual parties, and establishes a positive framework for future interactions.

There are various tactics that can be employed to identify mutual gains. The first of these is to identify an individual's interests, or the motives causing them to adopt a particular position. This reiterates the importance of recognising an informant's motivating factors, as acknowledged by other researchers studying the handler-informant relationship (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002; Billingsley, 2001). The difference however, is that rather than examining motivation to predict

risk or establish control, understanding motivation can be seen as the first step toward establishing a long term co-operative relationship. Once an individual's motivation has been discerned this insight can be used to "... invent options for mutual gain" (Shapiro, 2006, p. 271); in other words, finding ways that the informant's motivating factors can be satisfied without causing them to feel as though they have lost or conceded something in return. Once this pattern of exchange has been established in one topic area, the informant may be incentivised to co-operate in other areas also. As Billingsley (2001) found in his study, many informants are motivated by a dislike of the crime that they are reporting on, therefore, by pointing out that working as an informant will allow them to contribute towards the reduction of such criminality, the handler would be identifying a mutual gain that the informant could agree to.

As well as developing a keen understanding of the informant's motivation, a handler should also be cognisant of an individual's self-identity, as this will influence how they react towards the handler or any subsequent propositions (Shapiro, 2006). This is referred to as *relational identity*, and is influenced by two factors: autonomy and affiliation (Shapiro, 2006; 2010). Autonomy refers to a persons ability, or perceived ability, to make decisions, with reduced autonomy resulting in greater resistance and negative reactance. Affiliation refers to the level of connection felt between two individuals. The twin concepts of autonomy and affiliation are similar to those of potency and intimacy, which can be used to measure self identity (Youngs & Canter, 2012), as well as being conceptually similar to the broad definition of rapport (Alison et al., 2013). Consequently, an understanding of these influences on the individual informant, and within the informant-handler relationship, can be used to establish a long-term co-operative relationship (Shapiro, 2006; 2010).

As well as considering the motivation and self-identity of the informant, negotiation theorists would also advise handlers to be aware of their own *sources of power* (Rowe, 2006); that is, what they have at their disposal that might encourage collaboration. Rowe identifies a variety of sources of power, the first being legitimate authority. A handler may be presumed to have legitimate authority over an informant, who is likely to have a criminal lifestyle and background (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002), however, this perception may not be shared by the informant, especially if that informant is highly politicised or religious. This disparity in the presumption of authority might explain some of the tensions identified by Dabney and Tewksbury, and highlights an important point when considering legitimate authority – the handler should refer to an authority that is recognised as being legitimate by the informant (Rowe, 2006). Linked to this is moral authority and charisma. Mosab Hassan Yousef provides an example of this from his own experiences; despite initially engaging with Israeli Shin Bet handlers with the purpose of causing them harm, he decided to become a long-term co-operative informant for them when he realised that his handlers were more respectful and humane than the Hamas hierarchy he had grown up with (Yousef & Brackin, 2010).

The ability to offer rewards or impose sanctions is another method of exercising power over the informant. Both of these methods are evident in the HUMINT literature, with Billingsley (2001) observing that financial rewards are commonly used in the UK whilst in the U.S. both Dabney and Tewksbury (2016) and Miller (2011) note that the threat of future prosecution is used to obtain an informant's co-operation. However, Rowe (2006) also identifies the importance of reciprocity, whereby a reward bestowed by one party often elicits something in return. This principle suggests that a reward should not just be supplied once the informant has offered information, but that the use of a pre-emptive reward might actually elicit information from the source. Yousef's experience provides another example of this in action; he records that his Shin Bet handlers supported and financed his further education before they ever asked him to inform on his associates (Schirman, 2014; Yousef & Brackin, 2010).

Expertise, in the subject matter being discussed, in the cultural and linguistic norms of the informant and in HUMINT itself, is an important means of exercising power over an informant, as is the power of commitment, which, simply put, means that the handler is prepared to be persistent (Rowe, 2006). According to Rowe though, in a HUMINT situation at least, the most important source of power may actually be information. This can work both ways; for instance, the handler might be in possession of a great deal of information about the informant, giving them an advantage when trying to discern or manipulate the informant's motivating factors for their own advantage. However, the fact that the handler is seeking information also provides the informant with a unique advantage over the handler, as the informant can manage when, how and to what extent they reveal the information that is known to them.

The approach espoused by negotiation theorists (Rowe, 2006; Shapiro, 2006; 2010) is incumbent upon an understanding of the informants motivation though, something which may not always be possible in advance. In recognition of this, Rowe recommends the use of intangible benefits, which can often be a motivating factor in themselves, and points out that the relationship between informant and handler could become one of those intangible benefits. Consequently, rather than simply considering the different strategies and sources of power available to them, a handler should also consider their interpersonal style when engaging with an informant. Rowe suggests that, whatever style a handler adopts, the handler should seek to build trust, be respectful and avoid anything that might be perceived as humiliating. This form of respectful engagement will, according to Rowe, ensure that the handler is able to adopt the different strategies available whilst seeking to understand the informants' core interests or motivating factors. In other words, a friendly approach will provide the handler with sufficient time to attempt to develop the relationship into something more collaborative and long-lasting.

Overall, negotiation research suggests a theoretical model, aspects of which could be incorporated into a bespoke informant interview model to establish a long term collaborative relationship. As Rowe (2006) points out, preparation is an important aspect of any HUMINT engagement. The handler should enter into the interview armed with as much background information about the informant and

their potential motivations as possible. When they meet the informant, the handler should adopt a positive, respectful interpersonal style, creating a sense of affiliation with the informant and providing them with an impression of autonomy, fully aware that a positive relationship can in itself become a motivating factor for co-operation. This positive relationship can then provide a platform for establishing an informant's core interests or motivating factors, which can then be used to identify and suggest options for mutual gains in a manner that the informant is likely to find acceptable.

### ***Influence and Persuasion***

Whilst negotiation theorists adopt a holistic, long-term view of establishing co-operation, Guthrie (2004) considers a more finite form of negotiation, one done between lawyers on behalf of their respective clients, and argues that a variety of persuasion techniques can be used to gain co-operation from their opposite number. If successful, these techniques would provide a short cut to compliance, without having to rely on the lengthy and indefinite process of having to discern an individual's core motivation before beginning to apply the methods espoused by negotiation theory. The techniques proposed by Guthrie are taken from the work of Cialdini (2001; 2009), and there is evidence that informant handlers also employ these techniques with their informants (Nunan et al., 2020a). Based upon his research in the world of sales and marketing Cialdini has identified six tactics that can be applied to persuade and influence potential consumers. According to Cialdini these principles are motivational heuristics. In other words, when these techniques are used, potential consumers are affected by a motivational short cut; they forget their core motivation, disregard what may be in their best interest and find themselves succumbing to a salesperson's pitch. Given the heuristical nature of these techniques, they may be especially beneficial to those handlers who are having to meet and engage with a community based informant (as opposed to an incarcerated one), as these handlers are likely to have less time available to identify and satisfy underlying motives.

Cialdini's (2001; 2009) first principle of persuasion is *liking*. In essence, Cialdini argues that people like people who are like themselves, especially if that other person likes them in return. The strategy then, for someone wishing to exert influence, is to increase their likability. Cialdini documents several ways that this can be achieved. Firstly, the handler could emphasise their similarity to the informant, by identifying shared interests or experiences; this is not unlike rapport building, at least at a superficial level. Secondly, the handler should use genuine compliments and praise to indicate that they like and admire the informant, thereby making them more susceptible to liking the handler in return. Perhaps for handlers, who are less likely to share common values or experiences with their informants (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002), it may be possible to focus on the second aspect of increasing likability, namely, flattery. By praising the informant, a handler may be able to increase their

likability long enough to explore potential shared interests, which would then serve to enhance likability even further.

The second principle of persuasion identified by Cialdini (2001; 2009) is *reciprocity*. This is based on the observation that when a person gives something to another, the receiver feels a sense of obligation, encouraging them to give something in return. As Cialdini observes, quite often, the returned favour is greater than the initial sacrifice. This is not only effective with tangible gifts, but also with intangible rewards such as positive behaviour, therefore, if a handler wants an informant to behave positively towards them, they should first behave positively themselves; something that was noted by Alison et al. when developing the ORBIT model of interviewing (Alison et al., 2013; 2014). On this basis, reciprocity would appear to be a principle that can be readily applied as part of an informant interview, with financial incentive being an obvious one (Henry et al., 2019; Nunan et al., 2020a; Billingsley, 2001; Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002; Miller, 2011). However, there are other, less obvious gifts, such as refreshments or even advice (Hess & Amir, 2002; Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016), which the handler can use to engage a sense of reciprocity in the informant.

Cialdini's third principle is what he terms *social proof*. Simply put, this refers to the sense that the desired behaviour is not unusual, and that a large number of similar people regularly engage in such behaviour. Cialdini (2001; 2009) states that this is particularly powerful in situations of uncertainty; in those circumstances people have a tendency to mimic the behaviour of their peers. Unlike reciprocity, this is likely to be a difficult principle to apply in a HUMINT situation. As Hess and Amir (2002) are keen to point out, the informant is unique because of their unique access to coveted information and, given the covert nature of the relationship, it may be difficult for handlers to refer to similar others who are also providing information to law enforcement agencies without compromising other informants (Billingsley, 2001).

Cialdini (2009) also recognises the importance of *authority*. Authority does not necessarily refer to status, although it could, but also relates to expertise, with previous studies finding that expert opinion often has a persuasive effect on the audience. Consequently, a person can use this principle to their advantage by establishing their credibility as an expert early in any interaction. It is foreseeable that a handler can benefit from this principle by establishing their own credentials as an expert, both on the subject matter that they are discussing and as a trustworthy handler.

A further persuasion principle is *consistency*. This refers to the observation that, once a person has made a public commitment to behave in a particular manner, they are more likely to engage in behaviour that is consistent with this commitment. Cialdini (2001) cites the example of local residents who were asked to make a donation to a new recreation facility. Prior to being asked to make a donation some of the residents had been approached with a petition, which almost all of them signed, in favour of the recreation area. Of those who signed the petition over ninety per cent made a donation. Amongst the

group who had not been presented with the petition, just over half of participants made a donation. Within the context of a negotiation, Guthrie (2004) envisages compliance as a commitment in itself, stating that if a negotiator can get their opposite number to commit to co-operative behaviour early in the process, then this is likely to influence them later in the negotiation when they would ordinarily be less inclined to co-operate. Such a technique can easily be envisaged in a HUMINT situation, where the handler obtains a small commitment from the informant early on, resulting in a pattern of compliant behaviour in the future. Miller (2011) provides an example of this; he claims that it is a common tactic for handlers in the U.S. to encourage their informants to contact a criminal associate over the phone in the handlers presence. As soon as the informant commits to this behaviour, the handler then has leverage over them. Interestingly, Miller (2011) refers to this type of source as being ‘hammered’ by their handler, perhaps recognising that whilst Cialdini’s persuasion techniques engage a motivational heuristic, they do not replace the core motivational factors of the informant – in other words, a motivational short cut may result in short term motivation (Aronson, 1999).

The final principle identified by Cialdini (2001; 2009) as a persuasive tactic is *scarcity*. According to this principle, objects appear increasingly valuable as they become less available. Cialdini observes that salespersons use this to their advantage by highlighting not what their customers have to gain, but what they have to lose. For instance, if a particular product is not purchased on the spot, it may not be available later or, if it is, at a greatly increased price. This principle would appear to be commonly used in negotiation (Shapiro, 2006) and Guthrie (2004) points out that a negotiator often has opportunities to claim that time is scarce, emphasising the immediacy of any decisions that need to be made. A handler could use a similar tactic when attempting to engage an informant in compliant behaviour; however, given that the informant is likely to have unique access to information of interest (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002) this could be a dangerous technique for the handler to use, as the power of scarcity may actually lie with the informant.

It is clear that some of the principles of persuasion identified by Cialdini (2001; 2009) are more applicable within an informant interview than others. For instance, using social proof may be completely impractical in the operational circumstances of a covert relationship, whilst emphasising the scarcity of time and opportunity for compliance could set an unwanted constraint on the engagement. Additionally, if applied wrongly, some of the techniques could have negative repercussions, such as referring to supposed figures of authority who may not be as revered by the informant as they are by the handler, or by forcing an early commitment from the informant, resulting in them feeling ‘hammered’ into compliance. However, conceptually at least, some of these techniques would appear transferrable from the realms of marketing. Handlers can easily use praise and shared interests to increase likability and build the foundations of rapport for a deeper, more meaningful, long term collaborative relationship; and reciprocity seems like a powerful tool for the handler, who can employ a number of tactics ranging from

providing refreshments and financial incentives to improving living conditions and quality of life, to generate a sense of obligation.

It should be remembered though, that the environment in which these techniques have been tested and proven is based upon a fixed goal; namely the sale of a particular product, and responsive customers were already potential consumers. For example, whilst these principles may persuade someone to purchase a particular make and model of a vehicle, even before the techniques were deployed that customer was already interested in purchasing a vehicle. In other words, the consumer has not been persuaded to become a consumer, simply to consume a particular product. This can also be seen with negotiators. Negotiators enter into a negotiation seeking an advantageous outcome; but they are engaged in the negotiation process because, regardless of the use of persuasive techniques, they are already optimistic that an outcome can be reached. This is not necessarily the case with an informant. For many people, including criminals, the thought of providing information on their known associates to law enforcement officers has probably never occurred to them, and criminals in particular are known to enforce a strong 'anti-snitch' street ethic (Police call anti-snitching campaign irresponsible, 2011). Therefore, other techniques may be required, ones that soften a potential informant's susceptibility to the handlers message and provide them with a stable, lasting motivation to collaborate with law enforcement agencies.

### ***Changing Attitude and Behaviour***

The principles of negotiation theory are based upon exploiting a knowledge of the other party's core motivations to identify shared objectives and mutual gains, whilst Cialdini's (2001; 2009) persuasion techniques provide tools that can bypass core motivations to obtain instantaneous collaboration. However, the use of gifts and flattery as a form of ingratiation are reasonably direct, and whilst many people may react positively, they are often fully aware of the techniques being used against them and, consequently, their effects may well be short lived (Aronson, 1999). This may not pose a problem to a handler if they can quickly establish their informant's core motivation and build a co-operative relationship based upon shared objectives, as the negotiation theorists would recommend. This too may present the handler with future difficulties though. For example, what if, as Billingsley (2001) discovered in his study of informant motivation, revenge against a fellow criminal is the main impetus behind the informant's co-operation. Undoubtedly, this will provide handler and source with a shared objective, as both would want to see a criminal brought to justice, and there are likely to be mutual gains to this outcome too. Presumably though, the informant's co-operation would be conditional on achieving this objective. Consequently, once the objective has been achieved, their co-operation would cease. More worryingly, the informant's motivation could be one of malicious intent towards the handler (Yousef &

Brackin, 2010). In this situation the informant may recognise the techniques espoused by Cialdini for what they are – an obvious tactic for gaining influence – and may feign interest in the tangible and intangible rewards offered by their handler; but if the handler fails to discern their true, malicious motivation, then the handler could find themselves in real physical danger.

What is required then, is a means of affecting the informant's motivation in such a way that they develop a long term desire to work with law enforcement, and that any malice they may have once felt towards their handler is replaced by a willingness to co-operate. This is likely to require a fundamental shift in their core values and attitudes. As previously noted, many informants are recruited from the criminal sub-culture (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002; Miller, 2011), as such, co-operating with law enforcement is an alien concept for them (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016) and something they are generally uncomfortable with (Miller, 2011). Furthermore, assisting law enforcement is likely to entail an element of unwanted and unsought danger (Dodge, 2006). Criminal gangs have been known to run their own campaigns in high crime neighbourhoods to intimidate actual or potential informants, causing local residents to fear violent retribution if they are found to be co-operating with police and resulting in many of them claiming that they would never 'snitch' (Police call anti-snitching campaign irresponsible, 2011). Overcoming this entrenched attitude is likely to require more effort than simply offering favours and flattery.

Researchers studying how attitudes are formed, and even changed, have traditionally focused on one of two areas, either persuasion through the message content, or influence through social factors (Wood, 2000). However, Wood argues that these two spheres intersect, and there is an emerging consensus that individuals are motivated to alter their attitudes by one of three general concerns: either they wish to maintain a consistent concept of the self; they want to improve or maintain relationships with others; or they have a genuine concern to be accurate in their assessment of the issue at hand. Consequently, how an individual processes a message or generates an attitude is dependent on one of these three motives. When motivated by a desire for accuracy, an individual will adopt an open-minded approach, considering arguments from both sides of the debate, and will generate a reasonably balanced and generally neutral opinion. When individuals seek to ingratiate themselves with another person, they will focus on arguments that support that person's existing attitude and, ultimately, form an agreeable opinion. However, when motivated to remain consistent with their own pre-existing attitude, an individual will adopt a defensive strategy, selecting self serving arguments resulting in an increasingly entrenched opinion (Wood, 2000). A further observation is that, regardless of the motive behind a given attitude or the process of attitude formation, once an attitude has been formed it remains consistent across contexts (Wood, 2000). Therefore, a publicly stated opinion is equally maintained in private. Wood explains this phenomena by arguing that the motive for attitude formation not only influences the selected attitude, but also the information that was used when forming it. Consequently, this is the

information that is stored and most readily available in memory. The result is a persistent attitude even in unrelated contexts.

This has implications for a handler attempting to gain the long term co-operation of a potential informant. The most powerful motivation for attitude formation is a concept of self, and a desire to maintain internal consistency, consequently, when a person knows they are likely to be subjected to a persuasion attempt, they bolster their existing beliefs in preparation, engaging ‘biased processing’ (Wood, 2000) as a form of resistance. When considering a potential informant from a criminal sub-culture it is foreseeable that they are likely to hold pre-existing anti-establishment and non-cooperative attitudes representative of their criminal ingroup (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002; Miller, 2011; Police call anti-snitching campaign irresponsible, 2011; Yousef & Brackin, 2010). These are likely to be reasonably well established and resilient to any overt attempts at persuasion (Aronson, 1999; Wood, 2000). This is especially the case when the handler could be viewed as representing a threatening outgroup, in the form of an authoritative law enforcement agency (Gordijn et al., 2001). Therefore, when faced with particularly recalcitrant attitudes, indirect forms of persuasion may prove more effective than direct means. Wood advises that, rather than attempting to directly influence an individual’s attitude towards a given object, it may be easier to alter the way that the object is defined. Therefore, rather than attempting to persuade a potential informant of the benefits, both personal and societal, of *snitching* on their associates, a handler could redefine the meaning of snitching, linking this to the informant’s own concept of self. For example, if the informant views themselves as being conscientiously dedicated to their family, then informing on their associates could be re-framed as a means of safeguarding their family – either from particular individuals or a type of crime.

Ultimately, gaining informant co-operation may be part of an ongoing process; a process that is continually adapting to changing motivations and remains sensitive not only to how the informant perceives themselves, but also how their behaviour as an informant aligns (or contradicts) their self-identity. Given the complexities of gaining co-operation, it is perhaps unsurprising that many academics recommend a strategic approach (Guthrie, 2004; Rowe, 2006; Shapiro, 2006). Therefore, establishing a collaborative relationship is something that must be planned and continually assessed, and this is likely to influence the design of any informant interview model.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

Informants are valuable sources of information because of their access (through social relations) to persons of interest; they are specifically tasked to actively gather target information through social interaction, and are expected to accurately report this information to their handler. Consequently, informant handlers are required to build and maintain a long-standing interpersonal relationship with

their informants (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Henry et al., 2019; Stanier & Nunan, 2021). Researchers have identified three key areas of concern that are likely to impact the potential success of the relationship between handler and informant (source motivation, rapport, and gaining co-operation) and have begun to explore these concepts through a series of practitioner surveys and field experiments. However, existing interview models have a tendency to focus on organisational or operational objectives (i.e., gathering information) without having full consideration for the complex relational objectives that underpin an informant-handler relationship. If a bespoke informant interview model is to prove successful, it is plausible that both relational and organisational objectives will need to be addressed holistically.

Having examined relational objectives in the current chapter, the next chapter will therefore consider the extant literature pertaining to organisational objectives.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Organisational Objectives of an Informant Interview**

#### **Chapter Summary**

The Mendez Principles (APT, 2021; see Chapter One) specifically state that any effective and ethical interview should be founded on existing scientific knowledge, consequently, when seeking to develop a bespoke informant interview model, it is necessary to examine the extant HUMINT literature.

Scientific research examining HUMINT practices has largely been in response to practitioner failings, specifically, the mistreatment of detained enemy combatants at places such as Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay (Alison & Alison, 2017; Brandon, 2014; Otis, 2006). Whilst many researchers adopt a broad concept of HUMINT (i.e., Vrij & Granhag, 2014), it is clear from more recent research focusing on the narrower field of informant handling that many organisational objectives – such as employing and training the most appropriate staff, detecting informant deception and eliciting information – are shared across HUMINT contexts (Henry et al., 2019; Nunan et al., 2020a; Nunan et al., 2020b). The current chapter will therefore review the extant literature relating to these three psychological research areas, which are considered to reflect more ubiquitous organisational objectives (i.e., handler personality traits; detecting deception; information elicitation). Understanding how these organisational objectives can be achieved within the context of an informant interview will consequently provide the scientific foundations (APT, 2021) for the development of a bespoke informant interview model.

#### **Handler Personality Traits**

As early as 1963 the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recognised the importance of certain personality traits which were preferable in their HUMINT practitioners (Kleinman, 2006b), and to this day psychological testing is regularly used within HUMINT to determine candidate suitability (Kleinman, 2006b). However, for such tests to be of benefit, the perfect practitioner must first be identified and modelled (Kleinman, 2006b). Recent researchers have taken up this challenge, primarily by seeking the opinions of current HUMINT professionals as to what personality traits make for a good practitioner and, perhaps as importantly, whether such characteristics are innate or trainable (Henry et al., 2019; Redlich et al., 2014; Russano et al., 2014a, b).

Surveys conducted with U.S. based HUMINT practitioners produce a list of desirable HUMINT practitioner qualities. Redlich et al. (2014) found that friendliness, adaptability, sensitivity, and an ability to appear non-judgemental, all scored highly, and note that these qualities can all be taught and improved through training. There were however other attributes that cannot be trained, which were also deemed to

increase the likelihood of success. These included age, in that the interviewer should be both over 25 years old and older than the source, above average intelligence, over two years experience, and shared language and ethnicity (Redlich et al., 2014). A further survey was conducted by Russano et al. (2014b); their respondents also noted the importance of adaptability and maturity. However, scoring most highly, with 64% of participants rating it as the key quality in a successful intelligence interviewer, was interpersonal skills (Russano et al., 2014b). It is worth noting the relative homogeneity of respondents across these surveys though, especially in terms of race and gender. If the perfect practitioner is to be identified from within the current population, at least in the U.S., then they are likely to be white and male.

The three surveys conducted by Redlich et al. (2014) and Russano et al. (2014a, b) were all conducted in the U.S., and were primarily concerned with practitioners involved in the interrogation of military detainees. However, Henry et al. (2019) conducted a survey with informant handlers working within DSU's in Australia and New Zealand, specifically examining the key attributes of an informant handler and how these are likely to impact upon selection and training. Henry et al. identified three core functions of an informant handler: technique, alliance, and moderating variables. Technique is described as the tradecraft that is employed by handlers to ensure the safety and security of their informant, themselves and their organisation. Alliance is conceived as a combination of both relationship alliance and task alliance, with relationship alliance referring to the interpersonal relationship between handler and informant, and task alliance referring to the 'rules of engagement', or their professional relationship. These two aspects combine to produce an overall positive alliance that can be used to progress the intelligence objectives. However, participants also noted the importance of reciprocity, and Henry et al. observe that the skill of a handler appears to be an ability to balance their organisational objectives against the personal objectives of the informant, and refer to this as *moderating variables*. This is the ability to regain the balance between handler and informant objectives when something unforeseen occurs to disrupt this balance. These unforeseen events could be operational, and related to intelligence collection activities, or they could be personal, and Henry et al. provide the examples of the informant committing a criminal offence or the handler changing job.

Within this framework Henry et al. (2019) were able to identify a number of attributes that contributed to these core functions, for example, 'conversational skills' and 'ego dropping' scored most highly for building a positive relationship alliance, whilst the "... ability to convey clear instructions" and an "... understanding of techniques that promote compliance" scored most highly for task alliance (p. 8). Most participants rated the majority of the positive alliance attributes as untrainable; conversely, tradecraft techniques (i.e., those skills that were included in the core function categorised as *technique*) were deemed to be trainable. However, Henry et al. themselves observed that tradecraft techniques dominate current handler training, and so the perception amongst handlers that this function can be

trained, whilst the alliance function cannot, may merely represent the fact that this is how their organisation currently presents training to them. In other words, handlers may assume that if alliance attributes were trainable, then they would be trained in them.

Taken as a whole though, there does appear to be something of a consensus amongst HUMINT practitioners that adaptable interpersonal skills provide the foundation for their role, therefore, any bespoke informant interview model should seek to encourage and promote these qualities.

### **Detecting Deception**

Deception is defined as "... a successful or unsuccessful deliberate attempt, without forewarning, to create in another a belief which the communicator considers to be untrue" (Vrij, 2008, p.15). The psychology of deception and deception detection have a long history within the legal sphere (Volbert & Banse, 2014). The experiences of the war in Iraq highlight the importance of this topic to HUMINT researchers; a key factor in the U.N.'s decision to support military intervention in Iraq was false intelligence provided by a human source (Drogin, 2007; Lewis, 2013; Jervis, 2006). As part of the subsequent House of Commons review, Lord Butler recommended that, in future, HUMINT should be subjected to "... effective scrutiny and validation" (Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 2005, p.4). Consequently, the requirement to discern a truthful informant from a deceptive one is likely to be an ongoing concern for intelligence practitioners, and it is foreseeable that any bespoke informant interview model will need to integrate methods of deception detection. It is perhaps worth noting though, that the flaw in the intelligence case that prompted the war in Iraq may not have been an over-reliance on HUMINT, but a lack of it, and it may be that the best way to detect a deceitful informant is to have other informants who can be used to corroborate (or not) the information provided (Jervis, 2006; Reid et al., 2017), highlighting the importance of checkable details.

Vrij and Granhag (2014) recognise that most previous deception research has examined investigative interviews with suspects, however, there is a growing recognition that there are a number of meaningful differences between investigative and intelligence interviews. Whilst to date there are only a limited number of studies examining deceit within an intelligence gathering context (Vrij & Granhag, 2014), there are a number of recent studies that could be relevant to HUMINT practitioners, and which focus on different tactics that could be employed within an informant interview; these will be reviewed below.

## *The Polygraph*

On 9th July 2017, following a spate of terrorist attacks, UK counter-terrorism police announced that their informants would be subjected to polygraph testing, "... to improve the quality of intelligence" (Wilford, 2017). Given that practitioners are already using the polygraph to detect informant deceit, the efficacy of the polygraph as a deception detection tool, and how this is likely to impact an informant interview model, is worth exploring in greater detail.

Importantly, the polygraph is not designed to detect deception, rather, it is designed to measure three supposed cues to deception – skin conductance, blood pressure and breathing (Howitt, 2009; Vrij, 2008). Taken together, alterations across these three physiological cues are presumed to indicate deceit. Whilst there are two theories underpinning the application of the polygraph, the most frequently employed version is the Concern Based Test (CBT), which allows for a more proactive approach to polygraphy (Vrij, 2008). Proponents of this theory argue that deception will prompt emotional arousal, caused by fear or guilt, which will in turn produce a physiological response that can be detected by the polygraph (Vrij, 2008).

When conducting CBT, polygraphers follow a phased process (Howitt, 2009). During the pre-interview phase of gathering information, the polygrapher obtains as many case relevant details as possible, which are used to formulate a series of questions, amongst which will be the critical question. Questions always present a binary option and are contrived to compare presumed truthful responses to presumed deception. Ultimately, these responses are used by the polygrapher to interpret the subject's response to the critical question; if the response to the critical question is closest to a presumed truth, then that is coded as a truthful response, however, if it is closer to a presumed lie, then that is coded as a deceptive response (Howitt, 2009; Vrij, 2008). Having selected a list of appropriate questions, the polygrapher must then engage the interviewee in a pre-test interview, during which the polygrapher will explain the process and will attempt to convince the suspect of the polygraphs infallibility (Howitt, 2009). The next phase is the test, where the suspect will be attached to the polygraph machine (finger clips to measure skin conductance, arm cuff to measure blood pressure, and chest pads to measure breathing; Vrij, 2008), and they will be expected to confirm or deny each question. Following the test, and particularly where deception is indicated by the polygraph, the polygrapher will initiate the post-test phase, during which they will inform the suspect of the results and confront them over any suspected deceit. During this phase the suspect will be given an opportunity to tell the truth, on the basis that the polygraph is never wrong (Howitt, 2009).

CBT have come under widespread criticism from the academic community. Exuberant claims of lie detection accuracy (see for example, Ahlmeyer et al., 2000), are unsupported by laboratory experiments (see Vrij, 2008 for a summary) and many academics note that field studies rarely have an

independent measure of absolute truth, instead relying on confessions as their measure of accuracy (Ginton, 2013; Iacono, 2008; Vrij, 2008). This inflates the accuracy rates of field studies, as a guilty suspect who passes the polygraph (false negative) is unlikely to confess and, consequently, the polygraph result will be deemed accurate (true negative). However, polygraph proponents are able to dismiss laboratory research, arguing that it cannot effectively induce the levels of concern required to produce an accurate result. It can be seen then how polygraphers are able to both, reject empirical findings from laboratory experiments, whilst over inflating their own statistics.

It is not clear how a polygraph interview could be legitimately incorporated into an ethical informant interview. A fundamental principle of ethical interviewing is that the techniques employed must be based on scientific knowledge (APT, 2021), and it is arguable that the CBT version of the polygraph is not scientific (Lilienfield & Landfield, 2012). Additionally, interviewers should not mislead interviewees (APT, 2021), and the claim by polygraphers that the polygraph is infallible is clearly misleading (Ginton, 2013; Iacono, 2008; Vrij, 2008). However, it would appear that the polygraph is currently being employed on counter-terrorism informants (Wilford, 2017), therefore, the requirement to develop a bespoke informant interview model that is able to meet the handlers need to detect deceit is crucial to the development of an ethical informant interview model.

### ***The Cognitive Approach***

Theories that place an emphasis on the strategic process of deception predict an increase in cognitive effort, as the deceiver attempts to maintain the appearance of being truthful (Vrij, 2008), and although it is a relatively new direction for deception detection, the results of a number of fMRI studies indicate that deception does indeed require cognitive resource (Vrij, 2008). Subsequently, a number of researchers have sought to exacerbate cues to deceit by incorporating cognitively demanding tasks into an interview situation. In theory, by engaging a deceiver's cognitive reserves on fulfilling interview related tasks, their ability to maintain the pretence of honesty will be depleted, and cues to deceit will become increasingly evident.

Vrij et al. (2017) termed this *the cognitive approach*, and conducted a meta-analysis to ascertain its effectiveness. They identified three broad strategies within the umbrella of the cognitive approach that could potentially be incorporated into an informant interview model. Firstly, an interviewer can seek to increase the cognitive load placed on interviewees through a series of mentally taxing interventions, such as recounting their story in reverse order or asking them to complete other tasks during the interview. Secondly, an interviewer can actively encourage more information from their interviewees; in theory, deceivers ought to find it more difficult to provide detailed accounts than truth tellers, and they will not wish to provide investigators with checkable facts, as a result, their stories will be comparatively

shorter, less specific and less plausible. The third broad strategy available to interviewers is to ask unexpected questions; when faced with unanticipated questions the deceiver is forced to fabricate an immediate response, which can be cognitively demanding, and which will therefore elicit cues to deceit.

Vrij et al. (2017) found twenty-six studies that employed one or more of these techniques, fourteen of which directly compared a cognitive approach to a non-cognitive approach. Results indicated that in all but one of these fourteen studies, the cognitive approach resulted in greater accuracy for detecting both lies and truths individually, as well as producing a superior combined accuracy. Vrij et al. conclude that the cognitive approach, whilst increasing the ability to correctly classify truthful and deceptive accounts, does not require extensive training and has the additional benefit of working in conjunction with existing information gathering interview techniques. Fortuitously for informant handlers, techniques aimed at eliciting more information from truth tellers may produce more cues to deception amongst liars (Vrij et al., 2017). Furthermore, a number of deception detection studies have examined how the cognitive approach can be used to exacerbate inconsistencies within the interviewee's account (Nahari et al., 2014; Shaw et al., 2014; Vrij et al., 2014); given that intelligence practitioners believe that inconsistencies are the best way to identify deceit (Russano et al., 2014b), a manipulation that exacerbates inconsistencies could be beneficial to HUMINT practitioners. Whilst some of these cognitive approach studies seek to replicate an intelligence scenario, the paradigm employed by researchers is not dissimilar to a standard suspect scenario, where the interviewee has committed a transgression that they wish to conceal; for example, Shaw et al. (2014) employed a paradigm where the behaviour to be concealed is a conspiratorial conversation. Whilst this may simulate certain HUMINT situations (i.e., military detainees), this paradigm does not necessarily replicate the situational dilemma of an informant.

A widely recognised, yet understudied form of deception that may be particularly relevant in the context of an informant, is the *embedded lie* (Shaw et al., 2014; Vrij, 2008), where deceivers attempt to disguise the lie amongst a generally truthful account resulting in a deception of "... half-truths, vagueness, equivocations, and concealments" (Strofer et al., 2016, p. 349). An outstanding research question then, is whether cognitive load can elicit cues to deception given such a situation. Strofer et al. (2016) measured self-reported levels of stress and cognitive load, as well as presumed physiological cues to deceit (Electro-Dermal Activity [EDA]) on participants who were placed into one of three conditions: truth, lie, and embedded lie (where participants only lied on one target question). Results found that participants in the lie condition reported the highest levels of both cognitive load and stress, whilst those in the embedded condition reported high levels of stress but relatively low levels of cognitive load. Tonic EDA (long-term skin conductance) was found to mirror self-reported cognitive load (high in the lie condition but no difference between the truth and embedded condition). However, phasic EDA (short term fluctuations) was found to increase on the target question, about a falsified document, in both the

truth and embedded condition, but not in the lie condition. Therefore, in terms of self-reported levels of cognitive load, the patterns were indistinguishable between truth and embedded lie conditions. Overall, the results indicate that those who lie constantly experience more stress and cognitive load, as well as an increased physiological response, than truth tellers, whereas those who tell a lie embedded in an otherwise truthful account, only differed from truth tellers in terms of self-reported stress. The ongoing requirement to fabricate, and the need to suppress the truth, may explain the increase in cognitive load; however, whereas a detailed fabrication may be cognitively demanding, results from this study suggest that telling the occasional embedded lie may not be, consequently, the cognitive approach is likely to be less efficacious in these situations. It therefore remains to be proven that the cognitive approach would be a successful tactic for identifying informant deception.

### ***Language and Deception***

It is foreseeable that many of the deception detection techniques that have proven effective in a suspect scenario are not naturally transferrable to one involving a human source, primarily because of a non-custodial operating environment (Hazlett, 2006). Consequently, verbal behaviours may present the best opportunity for a handler to identify a deceptive informant.

Taylor et al. (2013) employed an *insider threat* role-play paradigm to study potential linguistic cues of deceit. Participants were asked to produce written reports as either loyal employees or as insiders, providing harmful information to an external agent. They found that insiders used more words associated with increased self-focus (i.e., personal pronouns) and cognitive processing than loyal employees. It is worth noting though, that the insider was considered deceptive (Taylor et al., 2013), however, this definition of deceit is based on the employer's perspective. From the external agent's (or handler's) perspective, the insider is successfully conducting their task. Consequently, the linguistic cues associated with a disloyal employee (insider / deceiver) may actually be consistent with those of a truthful and cooperative informant. Results therefore indicate that, when asked to provide information about their associates, the informant psychologically distances themselves from that group, and personal pronouns change from *we* to *I* (Taylor et al., 2013).

A further study examining deceptive language, conducted by Geurts et al. (2016), may also be relevant to informant handlers. They created a scenario to simulate a bomb hoax, where participants were either making a genuine threat (actualisers) or one they did not intend to carry out (bluffers). Participants were first required to contact a mock-victim to deliver the threat before being interviewed about it. The majority of participants (94%) reported developing a strategy prior to their interview, and bluffers were found to provide significantly more *how* (i.e., methodological) details during the interview than actualisers, although there was no significant difference for *why* (i.e., motive) details (Geurts et al., 2016).

Despite these results the authors acknowledged that the differences between the two groups were small and that, in an operational setting, such small differences may be difficult to detect.

Although the studies conducted by Taylor et al. (2013) and Geurts et al. (2016) do not exactly replicate the situational dilemma of an informant, they do simulate situations which are contextually similar, such as providing information on a group (Taylor et al., 2013) or communicating either a genuine or a fabricated threat (Geurts et al., 2016). Taken together, these studies indicate that deceivers adopt a strategic approach to communication (Geurts et al., 2016) and seek to disassociate themselves from those they are betraying (Taylor et al., 2013), furthermore, these psychological processes manifest themselves in their use of language. Consequently, an informant interview model that is sensitive to the informant's use of language may provide a handler's best opportunity for detecting informant deceit.

### **Information Elicitation**

The legislative definition of a CHIS makes it clear that they are to be used as a source of *information* (Home Office, 2018), and it is clear that there is an extant organisational objective to obtain information from registered informants. Fortunately, there exists a wealth of research in relation to investigative interviewing, which has identified a number of techniques and tactics that can be employed during an interview with a criminal suspect to elicit information from them (Bull et al., 2009; Dando et al., 2011; Pearse, 2009; Walsh & Milne, 2008). However, many researchers now recognise that there are significant differences between an intelligence and an investigative interview (Brandon, 2014; Intelligence Science Board, 2006; Evans et al., 2010; Evans et al., 2014; Redlich et al., 2014), and accept that findings from the investigative literature are not necessarily transferrable to an intelligence setting (Evans et al., 2010; Evans, et al., 2013; Kelly et al., 2013; Neuman & Salinas-Serrano, 2005; Redlich et al., 2014; Russano et al., 2014a, b). This has prompted a volume of research specifically seeking to identify a variety of techniques that can be employed to elicit information in an intelligence context, and which could potentially be incorporated into a bespoke informant interview model.

### ***Rapport Based Elicitation Techniques***

Kelly et al. (2013) examined the extant HUMINT literature to identify and document a variety of techniques that can be employed in an intelligence interview, which they define as an interview with a co-operative or unco-operative individual who is "... accused of some wrongdoing, including those possible conspirators in possession of information about wrongdoing" (Kelly et al., 2013, p. 166). In total, Kelly et al. documented 71 specific techniques and grouped these into six domains: (i) rapport and relationship building, (ii) context manipulation, (iii) emotion provocation, (iv) collaboration, (v)

confrontation / competition, and (vi) presentation of evidence. According to Kelly et al., these six domains comprise all the techniques, both identified and conceivable, which interviewers can use to elicit information.

Redlich et al. (2014) used the model developed by Kelly et al. (2013) when conducting a survey of U.S. HUMINT practitioners to examine the perceived effectiveness of various interview techniques. Their survey asked respondents to consider the frequency of use and perceived efficacy of 67 information elicitation techniques (plus a further 10 aimed at detecting deception) within varying interview contexts. When rating the use and efficacy of techniques without context, four of the top five came from the *rapport and relationship building* domain, these were (i) meeting basic needs, (ii) showing kindness, (iii) building a bond, and (iv) being patient. Conversely, confrontation tactics, such as rapid-fire questions and insulting the detainee, were amongst the least reportedly employed techniques. However, when the intended outcome was varied, so did the perceived effectiveness of different techniques. Rapport and relationship building was seen as being more effective when gathering intelligence whereas *confrontation / competition* and *presentation of evidence* techniques were perceived as being most effective for obtaining a confession. Overall, when compared to other domains, rapport and relationship building techniques were seen as the most effective for eliciting information.

These findings are largely consistent with investigative interviewing research (Alison et al., 2013; Alison et al., 2014; Gabbert, et al., 2021). Despite the consistency of these findings, many practitioners acknowledge that the effectiveness of individual techniques are dependent upon situational and personality factors (Russano et al., 2014b). Furthermore, the vignettes provided by Redlich et al. (2014) to vary the interview context are not concomitant with an informant scenario. The vignettes describe scenarios involving individuals who have been detained by U.S. forces, either overseas or at the U.S. border, and are suspected of being either directly or indirectly involved in terrorism. The information they hold is passive, in that it relates to knowledge they acquired before being detained, and there is no suggestion within the vignettes that these individuals could become tasked informants in the future. The situations described in these vignettes are likely to mirror a counter-terrorist suspect interview conducted in the UK (Pearse, 2009; Kelly et al., 2013), consequently, consistency of results is not necessarily surprising.

Interestingly, techniques designed to engender collaboration did not feature highly in any of the U.S. practitioner surveys (Redlich et al., 2014; Russano et al., 2014b). These techniques included offering both tangible and intangible rewards, making bargains with the source, or offering to assist them with a good reference to a higher authority (Kelly et al., 2013), and yet these are all techniques that feature heavily within the literature regarding active informants (Billingsley, 2001; Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002; Miller, 2011). Another infrequently reported technique from the collaboration domain was to provide the source with an opportunity to regain or assert control. This

would appear to be consistent with generating a sense of autonomy, which Shapiro (2006) identifies as a key component from negotiation theory, and representative of the team ethic reported by Hess and Amir (2002), where handler and informant actively discussed suitable targets and operational tactics. The lack of emphasis on collaboration techniques is perhaps representative of the underlying bias of the U.S. practitioner studies; it is clear from the samples and the scenarios provided by Redlich et al. (2014) that there is an overriding emphasis on terrorist detainees with historical knowledge of valuable information, in such circumstances the interviewer can patiently rely on the detainee's "... need for social interaction" (Russano et al., 2014a, p. 836). Handlers of a voluntary community-based informant may not have this luxury. Their informant is not captive, and can seek social interaction elsewhere; consequently, there is perhaps a greater requirement for them to obtain an informant's collaboration as a pre-requisite for information gain.

Nonetheless, Nunan et al. (2020a; 2020b) also found support for the centrality of rapport to information elicitation from a sample of informant handlers (N=24) in England and Wales, specifically those engaged in counter-terrorism investigations. Nunan et al. (2020b) specifically surveyed the use of interviewing techniques for the elicitation of information, with participants reporting that they actively employ elicitation techniques when de-briefing informants. These surveys were followed by Nunan et al. (2020c) and Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh and May (2020) who examined real-life telephone conversations (N=105) between seven pairs of handlers and informants. Again, these studies focussed on the use of rapport (Nunan et al., 2020c) and elicitation techniques (Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, & May, 2020). Nunan et al. (2020a) conclude that the two concepts are clearly linked, and suggest that any informant interview should begin with the establishment of rapport prior to eliciting information.

### ***Memory Enhancing Techniques***

As discussed in Chapter Two, the Cognitive Interview (CI) and later the Enhanced Cognitive Interview (ECI) were originally developed to enrich the evidence provided by co-operative witnesses to a crime, and relies on a variety of memory retrieval cues to improve eyewitness testimony (Fisher et al., 1989; Geiselman et al., 1985). The CI is underpinned by four principles of witness memory: (i) *event-interview similarity* predicts that it is easier to recall an event if the 'psychological environment' of the interview is similar to that at the time of the event; (ii) *focused retrieval* is predicated on the understanding that memory retrieval requires concentration; (iii) *extensive retrieval* is required because memory retrieval is effortful, and witnesses may be tempted to give up after the first attempt; (iv) *witness-compatible questioning* recognises that memories are stored and retrieved differently between individuals, therefore adaptable questioning is required to access the memories (Fisher et al., 1989).

These principles have subsequently formed the basis for a variety of memory enhancing interview models and mnemonic techniques designed to improve the elicitation of information (Bull et al., 2009; Dando et al., 2011). Unsurprisingly, researchers have sought to transfer these principles into HUMINT situations.

Potts (2009) compared the ECI to a Standard Interview (SI) in a simulated HUMINT scenario, by asking participants to imagine that they were an informant prior to viewing a video of an extremist political camp. After watching the video participants were interviewed using one of the two conditions. Whilst Potts (2009) found an advantage for the ECI condition, the procedure employed is not discernibly different from a standard eyewitness paradigm (i.e., Geiselman et al., 1985; Dando et al., 2011), consequently, it is unsurprising that Potts's results are consistent with previous findings regarding the CI (Kohnken et al., 1999).

Another study examining the efficacy of memory retrieval techniques in an intelligence scenario was conducted by Leins et al. (2014). They recognise the importance of human sources to both overseas military operations and domestic national security investigations, and expand the concept of HUMINT operations beyond the traditional academic scope of an *intelligence interview*, to include identifying potential informants, debriefing friendly forces or civilians, and interviewing existing informants in both custodial and non-custodial environments. They note that the U.S. Army Field Manual provides guidance on how to deal with human sources, but that much of its focus is on how to 'psychologically manipulate' uncooperative informants. However, it does not provide any guidance on memory enhancing techniques that might assist when interviewing a co-operative human source; it is this gap that Leins et al. seek to fill. They attempt to replicate a real-world scenario involving a co-operative informant who has previously attended several meetings of interest. According to Leins et al., eliciting information in such a scenario would require a two-phased approach. Phase one would involve identifying all the relevant meetings that the informant had attended; phase two would constitute the elicitation of a detailed account of one particular meeting of interest. To replicate this scenario, the authors chose to focus on family meetings, which are believed to be analogous to terrorist meetings, in that they both occur frequently, in various locations, and are attended by a number of people. Leins et al. also note that the regularity and overlapping features of family meetings, such as same attendees, same venues and so forth, are likely to hamper recall attempts. If an event is unique or significant, such as a witnessed crime, then recalling that particular event is relatively easy, but if it is one of many similar events then recall becomes more difficult. Leins et al. assume that this difficulty would be shared for both family and terrorist meetings. Utilising family meetings also had the advantage that corroboration could be sought from other family members.

The first phase of the recall process (to identify all relevant meetings) was achieved through a series of retrieval mnemonics: (i) *Extra-interview recollections* involve encouraging the informant to

think about the topic of recall prior to the interview; (ii) *Family tree*, the informant is asked to create a family tree as a cue to assist the recall of events when they were together; (iii) *Timeline*, the informant is asked to create a timeline, because family meetings often coincide with significant times of the year, therefore, a timeline may cue the recall of meetings; (iv) *Normative cues* refer to special events, such as weddings, that often prompt family gatherings, and that can be used to assist recall of meetings; (v) *Derived cues* are retrieval cues that are associated with typical family events, for example a particular food may relate to a particular festival, which might then lead to recall of a gathering; (vi) *Self-generated cues* are used by asking informants to consider why particular meetings occur, this may then prompt recall of the actual meetings themselves; (vii) *Subcategorizing* involves breaking down potential meetings into smaller groupings and providing cues for those groups, for instance, family meetings associated with your father's side of the family. Results indicated that even co-operative informants are generally poor at knowing how much information they hold, with a significant number of family meetings being reported during mnemonic assisted recall (as opposed to free recall). However, the extra-interview recollection proved to be inefficient, and hampered the use of subsequent mnemonic recollection (Leins et al., 2014). This is particularly worrisome for informant handlers; informants are often tasked to actively obtain information (Home Office, 2018), consequently, they can be expected to have an awareness of the target information prior to being interviewed about it, as such, they are likely to engage in unprompted extra-interview recollection before meeting with their handler. Consequently, the mnemonics employed by Leins et al. during phase two of the interview may be of minimal benefit to handlers of a tasked informant.

Phase two of the interview process probed a specific event from the list of elicited events using a version of the Cognitive Interview (CI). This CI condition was compared to a control condition that involved a free recall phase followed by a series of direct questions (Leins et al., 2014). Results indicated that the CI elicited more than twice as many details as the control interview, but there were no differences between the groups in response to the direct questions. Overall, the CI interviews took much longer but produced lengthier responses. Therefore, if there are no time constraints, then these CI techniques are likely to produce more detailed accounts (Leins et al., 2014).

Hope et al., also explored the transferrability of memory enhancing techniques to information elicitation from a human source, specifically examining the potential benefits of using a timeline and self-generated cues (Hope, et al., 2019; Hope et al., 2013; Kontogianni et al., 2018). The *timeline technique* was originally developed to enhance the recall of witnesses who had heard or observed multiple actor offences (Hope et al., 2013; Kontogianni, et al., 2018), but was later tested within a human source protocol (Hope, et al., 2019). The technique developed by Hope et al. is relatively straight forward, consisting of a strip of card (to represent the timeline of the event in question), person description cards and action cards. The witness / source would complete a person description card for each person involved

and would complete an action card for each action that constitutes the overall event. The witness / source would then organise the action cards in sequence across the length of the timeline, and link each action to the people involved. Hope et al. (2013) first tested the timeline technique on participants who had witnessed a mock-crime video, and found that participants in the timeline condition produced more correct details than any other condition and were less likely to make sequencing errors. Kontogianni et al. (2018) further developed the timeline technique to include either *other-generated cues*, which involved a mental reinstatement of context, or *self-generated cues*, whereby participants were asked to list six things they could remember about the event prior to completing the timeline. They found that amongst attentive witnesses, there was an advantage to using self-generated cues, although this advantage disappeared when witnesses were not completely attentive.

Following this, Hope et al. (2019) conducted three separate experiments exploring the applicability of the timeline technique; importantly, the second and third experiment explicitly asked participants to undertake the role of a tasked undercover officer, who was to attend meetings involving a criminal gang. Whilst Hope et al. (2019) explicitly task participants to undertake the role of an undercover officer, similar to the earlier experiment conducted by Potts (2009), the rest of the procedure was virtually identical to a standard eye witness paradigm – namely, participants observe a video and are then asked to report what happened. One notable difference with the experiments conducted by Hope et al. (2019) is that they focus on conversation; specifically, whether the timeline technique can be used to enhance memory recall for conversation details. Hope et al. (2019) hypothesised that an adapted version of the timeline technique, using a vertical timeline to maximise on the cultural tendency to present textual conversations in this manner within social media, would reinstate memory for the conversation event, and therefore produce more verbatim recall.

Across a series of experiments Hope et al. (2019) manipulated different variables, such as the stimulus (audio only or audio and visual), length of delay between event and recall and target information (conversation only, conversation and description, group hierarchy). Overall, Hope et al. (2019) found that there was an advantage to using the timeline technique, and attribute its success to the way that autobiographical memories are stored and accessed (in chronological packets), consequently, the timeline technique supported memory retrieval in a way that a free recall narrative account could not.

However, it is difficult to disentangle exactly where the advantage resides. For example, a significant amount of correct detail was obtained through the use of person description cards; these cards contained specific prompts (i.e., age, clothing etc.), which participants in the control condition did not receive. These cards do not match the chronological structure of autobiographical memories, consequently, the advantage of the timeline technique over free recall may owe more to memory activation spreading as a result of cued recall (Anderson, 2009; Hope, et al., 2019; Kontogianni et al., 2018) than to structured recall. Indeed, it is normal for people to produce a narrative in a sequential and

chronological order (Labov & Waletzky, 1997; Massa & Simeoni, 2014; McGregor & Holmes, 1999). It is therefore foreseeable that participants would be accessing autobiographical memory (albeit unsupported) in the free recall condition too. It is also worth noting that the CI encourages uninterrupted free recall prior to any cued or supported recall to avoid disrupting or contaminating the witnesses account (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992; Fisher, 2010). As such, the timeline technique may be better employed after an initial free recall narrative has been obtained, and a CI based interview technique may have been a more suitable comparator. When considering the timeline techniques applicability within the context of an informant interview, it is also worth remembering that, whilst participants were tasked to obtain target information, Hope et al. (2019) purposely avoided a scenario involving personal interaction. Consequently, participants remained passive observers, rather than actively using a new or existing relationship to gather relevant information (Home Office, 2018). Further research is therefore required to establish the efficacy of the timeline technique within an informant scenario.

Despite the strong academic support for using memory-retrieval techniques in informant interviews, Potts (2009) observes that handlers who have already been trained in the ECI continue to use a standard interview protocol in practice, and whilst Potts asserts the superiority of the ECI, he fails to question why trained handlers choose not to use these techniques in a real-life situation. Given that an informant interview is often conducted in a public place (Storm et al., 2015; Vrij & Granhag, 2014) and the handler-informant relationship is covert (Home Office, 2018), perhaps handlers have good reason to shun the relatively formalised and blatantly forensic retrieval techniques proposed by the research community. Additionally, the active role of an informant in the gathering, encoding, storing and retrieving of target information, may make the use of retrieval mnemonics largely superfluous in real-life situations (as evidenced by the negative impact of the *extra-interview* recollections employed by Leins et al., 2014). Furthermore, the collection of information from and about existing social contacts through the use of social interaction is likely to result in the formation of social (rather than autobiographical) memory, and memory enhancing techniques are yet to be tested in this type of scenario. Given these considerations, it can be envisaged that handlers may seek naturalistic mechanisms to support the recall of social memory.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

Since the U.S. National Defense College commissioned the Intelligence Science Board report on Educating Information (2006), there has been a noticeable increase in HUMINT research (Alison & Alison, 2017; Brandon, 2014; Barela & Ohlin, 2020). This literature base prompted the identification of six key research areas that are of particular concern to HUMINT practitioners, three of those (source motivation; rapport; gaining co-operation) were examined in the previous chapter (Chapter Four), whilst

the current chapter examined the literature pertaining to the organisational objectives of identifying suitable handler personality traits, detecting informant deception, and eliciting information. Undoubtedly, these organisational objectives will need to be addressed by any holistic informant interview model.

However, having been prompted by the mistreatment of military detainees (Alison & Alison, 2017; Brandon, 2014; Vrij & Granhag, 2014), much of the research conducted to date has focused on this particular HUMINT scenario (detainees); consequently, it remains unclear whether laboratory findings from paradigms that adopt a broad definition of HUMINT can be successfully transferred and applied to an informant specific scenario. Therefore, the next chapter will introduce a Study Space Analysis, specifically examining the independent, dependent, and operational variables that have been employed in HUMINT research to date.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Study Space Analysis**

#### **Chapter Summary**

The literature review conducted as part of Chapters Four and Five identified an apparent absence of informant specific research. However, if a bespoke informant interview model is to be developed, it is vital to understand the strength and depth of the research area. The current chapter therefore presents a study space analysis (SSA) of existing HUMINT research. An SSA is designed to provide practitioners and policy-makers with the assurance that their decisions are based on an empirically validated foundation, and goes beyond the recommendations of isolated studies to examine how often different variables have been tested across the research area. Fifteen published English language articles were found where the procedural design meets the definition of a human source. An SSA of these articles revealed that custodial sources who have passively obtained information dominate the research area. Additionally, there is a notable absence of experimental paradigms that accurately simulate the social and operational dilemma of an informant as an individual who is: (i) *tasked* to obtain target information; (ii) through *social interaction* with new or existing associates; (iii) which will then be *disclosed* during a de-brief with their handler. This has implications for practitioners seeking an evidence-based approach to handling informants. The outcome of this SSA was used to develop new experimental procedures that were employed as part of this thesis (Chapters Eight and Nine) to assist in the development of a bespoke informant interview.

#### **Introduction**

The development of a bespoke informant interview model should incorporate existing scientific knowledge into its design (APT, 2021); therefore, the aim of this study was to conduct a Study Space Analysis (SSA) to assess the extent of the current literature in relation to human sources of information. An SSA is a means of reviewing the breadth of a particular research area by analysing which experimental variables have been examined, the frequency of their occurrence, and where variables interact. An SSA goes beyond the findings and recommendations of individual studies to identify which areas have been satisfactorily researched and where there may be gaps in current scientific knowledge (Malpass et al., 2008). Moreover, an SSA is specifically designed to provide policy makers with the reassurance that there is strong scientific support for their policy decisions; alternatively, the results of an SSA can be used to inform future research to provide policy makers with the confidence they desire (Malpass et al., 2008; Memon et al., 2010).

## **Method**

### ***Literature Search***

To ensure that human intelligence sources remained the focus of the literature search, a list of suitable keywords and synonyms was produced. Searches were conducted via the online libraries of Newcastle and Northumbria Universities. The synonyms searched were: “*Human Source*”, *CHIS*, “*Human Intelligence*”, *HUMINT*, *Informant*, *Informer*, “*Confidential Inform\**”, *Spy*, “*Intelligence Inter\**”. The use of a truncating asterisk meant that results for both confidential informant and confidential informer were returned, as were results for intelligence interview and intelligence interrogation. A truncation command was not used on the keyword *inform\** as this would have returned articles including the word *information*, which was considered too broad a term for the purpose of this search, therefore, *informant* and *informer* were entered in full. Additionally, quotation marks were used to ensure the specific phraseology was searched, rather than the co-occurrence of individual words within a single article.

Searches were refined by subject area so that results were included from publications within psychology, law enforcement, military intelligence and counter-terrorism. The titles of all returned articles were screened to ensure relevance, with obviously irrelevant articles being rejected. Remaining articles were then subjected to an examination of the abstract and any which did not relate to human intelligence sources were excluded. To verify the robustness of the search criteria, a number of review articles were examined for relevant references, however, no new articles were identified during this process, confirming the veracity of the search process. Overall, 63 articles progressed to full text review.

### ***Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria***

To be included in the SSA, articles must have been published in a peer-reviewed journal. This is the standard recommended by Malpass et al. (2008) and is consistent with the ‘Daubert standard’. The case of *Daubert vs. Merrell Dow Pharmaceutical* (1993) established criteria for the inclusion of scientific evidence in a court of law in the U.S., stipulating that the scientific principle and methodology in question must have been rigorously tested and subjected to peer review before it can be introduced through expert testimony. These criteria have been adopted in other reviews of legal and forensic psychological research (e.g., Memon et al., 2010; Vrij, 2008) and seem a reasonable benchmark for any SSA which seeks to influence policy and decision-making within a legal or forensic sphere.

Additionally, studies must have employed an experimental procedure with independent and dependent variables. It is the purpose of an SSA to identify which variables have been satisfactorily tested and which have been neglected by the extant research, therefore, observational studies (i.e., Nunan et al., 2020c; Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, & May, 2020), practitioner surveys (i.e., Henry et al., 2019; Nunan et al., 2020a; Nunan et al., 2020b) and review articles (i.e., Luke, 2020) must necessarily be excluded.

Another function of an SSA is to provide reassurance to policy makers that their decisions are based on well proven scientific principles. However, policy makers operate within an existing legal framework, therefore, if the results of any given SSA are to be deemed relevant, the research which informs the results must be compatible with the legal context it claims to investigate. In England and Wales, there is a well-defined legal framework governing the use and conduct of CHIS (Home Office, 2018), and the purpose of the current thesis is to develop a bespoke interview model that can be employed with informants who are authorised to act as CHIS. Therefore, to be included in the SSA, the experimental procedure must have involved a participant, acting as an informant who was:

- a) providing information about the actions or intentions of someone other than themselves;
- b) providing this information with the expectation of confidentiality;
- c) providing information to a figure of authority.

Because it may not always be practical or ethical for experimenters to adopt the role of a member of a public authority, it was decided to moderate the third stipulation to *a figure of authority*, rather than merely a peer or associate.

The imposition of this criteria resulted in the rejection of a number of studies examining intelligence interviews with detainees. Detainees are passive sources of information, in that they obtained the target information incidentally and without the expectation of having to divulge it to the authorities at a later date, consequently, much of the research around detainee interviewing is concerned with obtaining information regarding the detainee's own (potentially incriminating) actions or intentions (see Vrij & Granhag, 2014 and Brandon, 2014 for reviews). As a result, the detainees psychological situation would appear to be closer to that of a suspect than a tasked informant (see for example Alison, et al., 2014). Therefore, any studies examining intelligence interviews where the subject was asked about their own potentially incriminating behaviour - whether that be solely their own, or their behaviour as part of a group - were excluded (e.g., Deeb et al., 2020; Brimbal et al., 2019). The expectation of confidentiality resulted in the exclusion of studies examining secondary confessions (e.g., Mote et al., 2018; Swanner et al., 2009; Swanner & Beike, 2010). Secondary confessions allow hearsay evidence to be introduced in a criminal court in the U.S. The intention is that, if a suspect confesses their crime to an associate, then that associate can provide a statement to police officers that can subsequently be introduced as

evidence in court. It is the fact that the statement can be used in an open court, thereby negating any expectation of confidentiality, which distinguishes this situation from that of a covert human source. Providing information knowing that it will be read out and challenged in open court is likely to impact upon both the willingness to co-operate and to deceive (Swanner & Beike, 2010), thereby differentiating the psychological context of a secondary confession witness from that of a covert human source.

The stipulation that information should be provided to a figure of authority resulted in the rejection of insider threat research (Taylor et al., 2013). This is unfortunate, as one organisation's insider threat is another organisation's informant. However, whilst the procedural design of an insider threat study may replicate the psychological dilemmas facing an informant, the dependent variables are designed to detect an insider threat (Taylor et al., 2013) rather than improve the management of a human source; consequently, they do not serve to expand the HUMINT study space.

### ***Procedure Used for Coding***

The independent (IV) and dependent (DV) variables were identified for each study and listed on a matrix (see Figure 6.1). Procedural variables (the aspects of the studies design that remain constant and are not subject to either manipulation or measurement) were also identified and added to the matrix. Procedural variables were separated into two sub-categories: (i) type of source and, (ii) type of interaction (i.e., telephone, face-to-face etc.). Within (i), sources were deemed to be either active or passive and in either a custodial or non-custodial setting. Whilst the setting refers to the physical environment where the source interview is supposed to take place, the terms active and passive are used to describe how the source has obtained the target information. An active source is one who has actively obtained target information through social interaction with new or existing associates in the knowledge that they will be required to recall that information during a subsequent de-brief. A passive source is one who encoded the target information incidentally (by any means; e.g., observation, eavesdropping or social interaction) and is not expecting to have to recall it later on. Although many of the studies included in the SSA do not explicitly state the type of source they are studying, it can often be discerned from the methodology described. Sub-categories of independent variables included type of interview, co-operativeness and capability, whilst sub-categories of dependent variables included objective and subjective measures.

### **Results**

Overall, 15 published articles were identified adhering to the inclusion criteria outlined above, Table 6.1 lists citations of the articles included in the analysis.

Table 6.1: Articles included in SSA

Ask et al.	(2019)	(Study 2)
Dawson et al.	(2015)	
Granhag et al.	(2015)	
Granhag, Oleszkiewicz et al.	(2015)	
Granhag et al.	(2020)	
Hope et al.	(2019)	(Studies 2 & 3)
Leins et al.	(2014)	
May et al.	(2014)	
May & Granhag	(2016a)	
May & Granhag	(2016b)	
Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Montecinos	(2014)	
Oleszkiewicz, Granhag, & Kleinman	(2014)	
Oleszkiewicz et al.	(2017b)	
Palena et al.	(2019)	
Rantamaki et al.	(2020)	

Coding of these articles identified a total of 52 different variables that have been subjected to examination in a human source experimental procedure prior to June 2021, including 18 different interview procedures. Figure 6.1 shows a matrix containing each of these variables and a frequency count of how often variables interact within studies.

Figure 6.1: Matrix showing interaction of empirically tested variables



Tables have been produced summarising the most pertinent findings from Figure 6.1. For example, Table 6.2 shows how often the different types of human source (active / passive and custodial / non-custodial) interact with the various interview conditions examined within a human source paradigm. Due to the number of different interview procedures identified, procedures that are theoretically similar have been amalgamated for ease of interpretation, for example, all of those that examined a variation of the *Scharff Technique* (seven in total) have been amalgamated into a single category: Scharff; likewise for the Direct Approach (any technique using direct questioning), and those utilising Cognitive mnemonics.

Table 6.2: Frequency count of interactions between Type of Source and Interview Condition

	<b>Active</b>	<b>Passive</b>	<b>Custodial</b>	<b>Non-custodial</b>
Primed	0	1	1	0
Non-primed	0	1	1	0
Direct Approach	0	10	9	1
Scharff	0	15	13	2
Cognitive	0	2	0	2
Free Recall	0	4	0	4
Unstructured	0	1	0	1
Timeline	0	2	0	2

Table 6.3 shows the interaction between the most frequently employed interview techniques (Direct; Scharff; Cognitive; Free Recall; Timeline) and the dependent variables measured. Dependent variables include both objective measures and the most frequently employed subjective measures, with objective measures referring to anything that was captured, coded and measured by the experimenter (i.e., units of information), and subjective measures referring to anything that was reported by the participant (in the role of a human source).

Table 6.3: Frequency count of interactions between Interview Condition and DV's

	Direct	Scharff	Cognitive	Free Recall	Timeline
<b>OBJECTIVE</b>					
Units of Info	7	13	2	4	2
Accuracy	1	3	2	4	2
<b>SUBJECTIVE</b>					
Interviewer Knowledge	7	15	0	0	0
Interviewer Objectives	7	13	0	0	0
Amount Disclosed	6	12	0	0	0
Amount Revealed	0	2	0	0	0
Willingness to Meet	0	1	0	0	0

## Discussion

Perhaps the most striking result of the SSA is that not a single study has examined an *active* human source scenario – that is, a human source who has actively obtained target information through social interaction. The manual of guidance for CHIS in England and Wales clearly stipulates that a CHIS is a human source who has been authorised to carry out tasks and to actively gather information on behalf of their handlers through new or existing social contacts (Home Office, 2018). It is evident from this definition and from anecdotal accounts (i.e., Storm et al., 2015) that informant deployments develop through a series of phases, specifically: (i) receipt of tasking instructions; (ii) obtain target information through social interaction; (iii) informant interview / handler de-brief. However, whilst a number of studies have informed participants that they are to assume the role of a human source, often describing them as *spies* or *undercover police officers*, target information has always been passively presented to participants, in the form of a written briefing or video / audio file, thereby closely mimicking experimental paradigms usually associated with witness research. Consequently, if HUMINT practitioners and policy makers were looking for an empirical evidence base to inform their operational decision-making, they would not find a single scientific study that accurately replicates and represents the situational and operational dilemma of a registered CHIS (IPCO, 2020).

A further noteworthy omission is the absence of the PEACE interview model from experimental procedures conducted to date. The PEACE interview is a well-established interview model (Bull et al., 2009), it fully complies with The Mendez Principles (APT, 2021), it is the only interview model currently

recommended by the CoP (CoP, 2020), and has been recommended for use in HUMINT interviews (Evans et al., 2013; Nunan et al., 2020b). Consequently, the PEACE model provides a relevant comparator for any other interview protocol. However, the most frequently studied interview protocols are the Scharff Technique (15) and the Direct Approach (10). The Direct Approach is taken from the U.S. Army Field Manual (Evans, et al., 2014) and involves the questioning of a presumed-to-be cooperative detained enemy combatant in a direct and business-like manner. As can be seen from Figure 6.1, both the Direct Approach and various versions of the Scharff Technique frequently interact, indicating that they are often compared within a single study. The dominance of the Direct Approach as a relevant comparator highlights the focus of HUMINT research interest as intelligence interviews with detained subjects.

This is further exemplified by the number of experimental procedures (either explicitly or implicitly) employing a role play scenario featuring a custodial human source. Whilst IPCO (2020) recognise that CHIS can be registered inside prison, they acknowledge that these are relatively few and recommend registering even fewer. Consequently, whilst interviewing detainees who have passively obtained target information prior to their detention may be of interest to specialist units such as the FBI's High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG; 2018), these kinds of interviews do not appear to represent the majority of informant interactions (Birkett & Pike, 2017; IPCO, 2020; Nunan et al., 2020a; Nunan et al., 2020b). Once again, the lack of research focussing on non-custodial informants leaves a proportion of HUMINT practitioners without a relevant evidence-base to call upon when making operational decisions.

The most frequently measured dependent variables also seem to reflect a skewed research area. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given a human sources' definition as a source of *information*, all the interview protocols studied within HUMINT research have been tested against the amount of information disclosed by the source (in one form or another, e.g., Dawson et al., 2015, operationalise *forthcomingness*). However, despite the apparent importance of detecting informant deception (Hazlett, 2006; Vrij & Granhag, 2014) only one deception detection study (Palena et al., 2019) met the inclusion criteria for the SSA. Indeed, the most frequently measured dependent variables were subjective measures, in particular the participant / source's perception of the interviewer's prior knowledge and objectives. Again, this is indicative of the dominance of research examining the Scharff Technique, proponents of which define elicitation as the ability to obtain information without revealing gaps in intelligence and / or intelligence objectives (Oleszkiewicz et al., 2014). These variables may indeed be important when attempting to interview a semi-resistant detainee who may be imminently released from custody (as is envisaged within the Scharff Technique paradigm), however, it is difficult to ascertain the relevance of these measures when considering the situational dilemma of an active informant being tasked to obtain target

information – in such a situation, it would seem necessary for the handler to inform the source of both existing intelligence gaps and their associated intelligence objectives (Hess & Amir, 2002).

### ***Strengths and Limitations of the Study***

As with all research, there are strengths and limitations. The stringent application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria resulted in the analysis of a very limited study space. There are a number of research domains, such as secondary confessions and insider threats, which will undoubtedly be relevant to informant handlers within England and Wales, as will research examining investigative interviews, detecting deception, influence and persuasion and probably many more. However, it was not the purpose of this SSA to identify areas of previous research that may be merely relevant to practitioners; rather, it was the intention to identify research that is capable of informing policy decisions, of providing reassurance to policy makers at the highest level, and of forming the basis for a bespoke informant-interview model. Indeed, the inclusion criteria could have been even more stringent, however, in the current study it was decided to focus on the relational aspects of the CHIS definition, such as their relationship with the individual(s) of interest and the receiving public authority, rather than the process of obtaining information (through tasking and social interaction). Had a more procedural approach to inclusion been adopted, incorporating the active role of an informant in the gathering of target information, then not a single study would have been included in the SSA.

The SSA is also limited by only including English language articles which have featured in peer-reviewed publications. Potentially, there are unpublished articles which may be relevant to human source practitioners that have not been included. However, it should be remembered that an SSA is not intended to be a literature review of relevant findings. Malpass et al. (2008) identify two models that inform the application of scientific research, these are the *best practices* and the *well-established knowledge* models. The best practices model suggests that policy can be determined based upon existing scientific knowledge, regardless of how limited and unchallenged this knowledge may be; it is foreseeable that such a model could result in frequent and potentially expensive shifts in policy. It may be preferable then to adopt a well-established knowledge model, which advises that the scientific knowledge being applied should be well investigated and a consensus reached within the research domain. This is a theoretical threshold, however, there is an implication that the knowledge base is accessible and open to critique. An SSA is designed to assist in establishing where a well-established knowledge base exists and where there are gaps in the available research, consequently, limiting the SSA to accessible peer reviewed articles seems a reasonable concession.

### ***Implications for Future Research***

It is clear from the results of this SSA that research examining informant interactions, in accordance with the current legislative definition of a CHIS, is not well established, especially when considering non-custodial active sources of information. Consequently, it will be necessary to conceive of new experimental paradigms capable of simulating the unique situational dilemma of a tasked informant and their interaction with a handler if a bespoke informant interview model is to be developed. Inspiration can be drawn from studies examining secondary confessions (see Swanner & Beike, 2010; Swanner et al., 2009) and insider threats (see Taylor, et al., 2013), however, these will need to be adapted to an informant scenario.

Equally noteworthy is the strong focus on obtaining information, which dominates the measured variables across the study space. The complex situational dilemma and legislative framework surrounding an informant in England and Wales will undoubtedly present practitioners with other considerations that they will need to manage during the course of an informant interview. Consequently, there is a clear need to fully identify and understand the needs of informant handlers if any subsequent informant interview model is to successfully address them.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

It is clear from this SSA that further research specifically examining tasked informants, as legally defined in England and Wales, is required before any recommendations can be made to practitioners or policy makers with any degree of confidence. Likewise, further foundational research is required before an informant specific interview model can be properly developed. Fleming and Rhodes (2017) encourage the incorporation of experiential knowledge into the development of an effective and acceptable research-base, consequently, the first step in developing an applicable interview model would be to examine and understand the experiences of practitioners; this will be specifically addressed in the next chapter.

## Chapter 7<sup>3</sup>

### Practitioner Survey

#### Chapter Summary

This chapter describes a practitioner survey that was conducted to assess the relative importance of the six objectives (both relational and organisational) that are likely to affect an informant interview, as previously identified in Chapters Four and Five: (i) handler personality traits; (ii) CHIS motivation; (iii) rapport; (iv) gaining co-operation; (v) obtaining information, and; (vi) detecting deception. A bespoke online survey was designed and disseminated to 34 practitioners using purposive and snowball sampling. Directed Content Analysis and Thematic Content Analysis were conducted. Results found that practitioners appear most concerned with gaining co-operation (iv) and detecting deception (vi). Results also found an inter-connectivity between the six categories, with informant handlers often having to balance competing requirements. These findings have implications for the development of a bespoke informant interview model, which will need to address each of these objectives whilst being cognisant of their inter-connectivity.

#### Introduction

Any bespoke informant interview model will need to be cognisant of, and adaptive to, the needs and concerns of practitioners. Therefore, the current study sought to build upon previous studies (i.e., Birkett & Pike, 2017; Nunan et al., 2020a; 2020b; Stanier & Nunan, 2021) by establishing a clear framework for future research, informed by the views and concerns of experienced practitioners. To achieve this, a bespoke survey was designed to identify informant handler's main objectives and concerns. The design of the survey was informed by previous research examining the views of HUMINT practitioners in the U.S. (i.e., Redlich et al., 2014; Russano et al., 2014a; 2014b). Although much of the extant research has been conducted in the U.S., predominantly in relation to terrorist detainees, a number of thematic categories were identified from the literature review (see Chapters Four and Five) that appeared to be generalisable to the UK, and which were used to inform the design and analysis of the current study. These categories were: (i) handler personality traits; (ii) understanding source motivation; (iii) rapport; (iv) gaining co-operation; (v) obtaining information, and; (vi) detecting deception.

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<sup>3</sup> Elements of this chapter were included in the below publication. The present author was the sole author of all material included in this chapter from this publication: Moffett, L., Oxburgh, G. E., Dresser, P., Watson, S. J., & Gabbert, F. (2021). Inside the Shadows: A survey of UK HUMINT practitioners examining their considerations when handling a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS). *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law*. doi:10.1080/13218719.2021.1926367

## **Aim of Current Study**

The aim of the current study was to conduct a survey of current and former UK-based informant handlers to identify the comparative importance of the six identified thematic categories. This presents a unique contribution to the current research area. Although the thematic categories were identified from previous research, much of this research was conducted outside of the UK and focussed on incarcerated (passive) sources of information. Whilst recent surveys conducted with UK handlers offer support to the generalisability of the six thematic categories (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Nunan et al., 2020a; 2020b; Stanier & Nunan, 2021), none of these studies explicitly presented the six identified categories to participants, nor were participants asked to rate their relative importance. Consequently, whilst research on each of the individual categories is likely to be beneficial, there is a danger that areas of potential research which are most important to informant handlers in the UK, will be neglected in favour of those areas which are of most importance to U.S. operatives seeking to humanely elicit information from incarcerated sources of information.

It was anticipated that the results of this survey would directly inform the development of a bespoke informant interview model, through a greater understanding of the importance and prioritisation of various thematic categories.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

An initial purposive sample was established through receptive senior police officers across five force areas throughout England and Wales. Snowball sampling was then used, with the initial purposive sample being asked to forward the survey on to specialist individuals and/or units (i.e., DSU's) who would be qualified to complete the survey. Participants who completed the survey were also invited to share it with other current or former informant handlers.

To maximise the likelihood that the data analysed was from an eligible sample, a conservative approach was adopted to data inclusion, specifically, partially completed surveys ( $n = 15$ ) were discounted from further analysis. The final sample ( $N=34$ , *male*  $n = 27$ ; *female*  $n = 7$ ) appears to be a mature and experienced sample, with the most frequently selected age range being between 50-54 years ( $n = 10$ ) and the most frequently selected length of service as a handler being between 6-10 years ( $n = 14$ ).

Due to the covert nature of CHIS and CHIS handling, participants were not required to record any data that could be used (either in isolation or cumulatively) to identify themselves or their CHIS. Although it is normal for online survey tools to capture IP addresses, which are not specific to individuals and are generally not deemed to be identifying data, the option to ‘anonymise responses’ was purposely selected to ensure that even IP addresses were not captured. Participants were informed that whilst responses would form part of the subsequent analysis and will inform the results of this thesis and any subsequent research articles, the raw data would be stored separately and would not be shared, thereby further protecting any identifying language whilst ensuring data protection compliance.

### ***Procedure***

Following full ethical clearance from Newcastle University Ethics Committee (Ref: 9699/2018), and given the sensitive nature of handling informants (Home Office, 2018), this study was split in two: (i) a pilot study, and (ii) the main study.

#### **Pilot Study.**

This was conducted on a sample of three current practitioners who were asked to review the content of the survey to ensure that questions asked were not deemed too intrusive and did not breach expected levels of confidentiality. This is especially important given that law enforcement agencies have an ongoing duty of care to their sources (ACPO, 2007). Having conducted this pilot/consultation phase, an electronic version of the survey was created using Qualtrics software.

#### **Main Study.**

A link was disseminated to the initial purposive sample via email with information regarding the purpose of the survey. Participants were assured that they were not obliged to participate in the study and that if they chose to do so they were not obliged to leave their demographic details or any other information if they felt that this would breach the confidential nature of their role. Participants completed the survey by clicking on the electronic link. They were first required to provide informed consent before answering a series of 10 questions.

The first three questions were automatically randomised word association questions. Participants were asked to list as many words that they could think of which they associate with: (i) the word CHIS; (ii) the phrase CHIS handler, and; (iii) the phrase CHIS meeting. These words and phrases were taken from the CHIS Code of Practice (Home Office, 2018) and were specifically designed to trigger

associations to actual informant meetings and the dynamic that exists between handler and informant during these meetings. The fourth question was open-ended, asking participants what their main considerations were when handling an informant. Question 5 then presented participants with the six thematic categories (handler personality traits, rapport, informant motivation, gaining co-operation, obtaining information and detecting deception) and they were asked to rate the relative importance of each one on a continuous visual analogue scale (0 = low importance, 10 = high importance). The same thematic categories were presented for question 6 and participants were asked to select which one they believed required more scientific / psychological research to improve working practices. This question included the option to indicate *other*, and an opportunity to expand on this if it was selected. In questions 7-9, participants were asked to provide demographic details (age, gender, length of service as a CHIS handler). Finally, participants were provided with an opportunity to add any further comments which they believed may be relevant to the research, or to elaborate on any of the answers they provided.

The survey produced both quantitative and qualitative data, consequently, results were analysed using three methods of analysis: descriptive statistics, directed content analysis and thematic content analysis. This triangulation of analysis provides the data with greater depth and breadth, allowing more nuanced conclusions to be drawn.

Following feedback from the pilot study it was agreed that all responses would be anonymised and that raw data would be stored securely and only reproduced as part of this thesis and any subsequent publications in a sanitised version.

## *Analysis*

### **Directed Content Analysis.**

Content analysis is a means of taking qualitative data and imposing a quantitative structure upon it (Youngs, 2013). This is particularly the case with directed content analysis, which can be applied when a theoretical framework consisting of defined thematic categories already exists (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Given the aim of the current research was to establish the relative importance of a variety of pre-determined categories, this analysis was deemed as the most suitable for questions 1 to 4 (word association questions). Directed content analysis involves the coding of free narrative text into recognised categories before using this data to create a hierarchical table of results (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This can then be used to compare the frequency occurrence of each coded category, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of the relative importance of each individual theme, and how the abstract categories identified in the literature translate into practical considerations.

Despite having pre-determined categories, coding of responses into one of these thematic categories evolved inductively with reference to the entire dataset often providing context for ambiguous phraseology. For example, where one participant might simply record the word ‘access’ as a consideration when handling informants, another may expand upon this idea by referring to ‘access to information’, thereby assisting with the codification of the single word, ‘access’ as being a consideration of obtaining information. Consequently, through reference to the literature and an inductive interpretation of the data set, an operationalised definition of each category was developed, as outlined below:

### ***1. Handler Personality Traits.***

Selection of this category was based on reports in the literature of current, historical or recommended personality profiling of intelligence practitioners (Kleinman, 2006a; Redlich et al., 2014; Russano et al., 2014a; 2014b) as well as the practice of specifically pairing the handler and informant (Birkett & Pike, 2017) – this has the potential to be an area of future research that psychologists are likely able to contribute. Therefore, words or phrases describing handler characteristics were placed in this category; frequent ones included “confident”, “introvert”, “outlier” and “good judge of character”, but also included longer descriptions such as, “never emotionally invest”. One respondent used the phrase, “you are still a copper”, highlighting the importance of their job to the handler’s personal identity. Thus, words or phrases relating to their role or employment such as, “officer”, or anything which might impact upon their work, such as “personal reputation”, were also included here.

### ***2. Informant Motivation.***

Some previous observational studies have recorded the importance of understanding source motivation to practitioners (see Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002) and studies have been conducted in both the U.S. and the UK examining the motives of a covert human source (Billingsley, 2001; Miller, 2011). These studies identified a number of motivations, including leniency in the criminal justice system, financial reward, revenge or removing criminal competitors, and even moral or interpersonal motivations. Consequently, any word or phrase relating to one of these potential motives (e.g., “greedy”, “vindictive” and “concerned citizen”) were included in this category. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the findings of previous observational studies, there were a number of words or phrases simply expressing a direct concern for understanding informant motivation such as, “understanding the CHIS – motivation”, or more simply, “Motive, motive, motive!”, these too were included in this category.

### ***3. Rapport.***

Recent research has been undertaken to operationalise the definition of rapport (e.g., Alison et al., 2013; Alison & Alison, 2017; Alison et al., 2014; Gabbert et al., 2021). Rather than a series of prescriptive techniques, Alison et al. (2013; 2014; 2017) see rapport as an approach or mindset based

upon non-accusatory and respectful interpersonal responses. Nunan et al. (2020a) also emphasise the interpersonal nature of rapport. Therefore, words or phrases demonstrating a consideration of a respectful interpersonal interaction, such as, “active listening” and “empathy”, were included in this category. Nunan et al. (2020a) also note that sales techniques, such as those identified by Cialdini (2009) are often used by handlers to establish rapport with their informants. These techniques involve things such as emphasising similarities and demonstrating affection for the other person (Cialdini, 2009). Consequently, words or phrases emphasising presumed similarities (such as “humane”), or affection (such as “friendly” or “brilliant”), were also included in this category. Additionally, Nunan et al. (2020a) observe that rapport, at least within the context of a relationship between informant and handler, could often be fluid and evolving but ought to be based on, “Managing their motivations and welfare” (Nunan et al., 2020a, p.3). Given Nunan et al.’s emphasis on welfare, anything pertaining to the informant’s wellbeing such as “mental health” or “physical wellbeing” were also included in this category. The importance of these two linked concepts (rapport and welfare) was demonstrated by the fact that both words frequently occurred throughout the dataset.

#### ***4. Gaining Co-operation.***

Gaining co-operation has often been studied in a forensic context in terms of forensic interviewing, and is often associated to either (or both) information elicitation and rapport (see e.g., Alison et al., 2013). However, an informant is not simply an interviewee with passive access to information, rather, they are an active participant in the gathering and disclosure of target information (Billingsley, 2009; Home Office, 2018; Kleinman, 2006b; Storm et al., 2015; Schirman, 2014; Yousef & Brackin, 2010). Therefore, gaining the co-operation of an informant is not simply about accessing information that is already in their possession, but is more concerned with tasking them to obtain that information in the first place (Schirman, 2014). Despite being seen as an important part of the source handling process, this is an under-studied area of research, leaving practitioners to rely on intuition and the experience of their predecessors to try to recruit and gain the co-operation of a potential human source (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016). Given the emphasis on tasking contained within the definition of a CHIS (Home Office, 2018), any words relating to the tasking of an informant, such as “direction and tasking”, or techniques used to persuade an informant to co-operate with law enforcement, such as “make them think you like them” were included in this category. Additionally, any words or phrases relating to concepts that might facilitate or ensure the success of informant tasking were included in this category (e.g., “CHIS safety”, “protection”, “tradecraft” and “covert methodology”). A further sub-category of phrases included in this category pertain to risk, namely the risk from a non-cooperative informant. This is exemplified by phrases such as, “ensure compliant” and “who’s running who?”, and includes words which might impact upon their compliance, such as those describing the informant as “sneaky”, “unpredictable” or as a “manipulator”.

### **5. *Obtaining Information.***

Information elicitation, including how it is done and how it can be improved, has perhaps received the most attention from academic research seeking to inform HUMINT practice (see Brandon, 2014; Vrij & Granhag, 2014) and the requirement to obtain information is encapsulated in the definition of a CHIS (Home Office, 2018). Consequently, any words or phrases mentioning “intelligence” or “information” were included in this category, including words relating to “access” to information or the “dissemination” of information, as well as those referring to the “value” or “reliability” of information. Synonyms describing the informant’s role as an intelligence gatherer, such as “agent” were also included in this category, as were descriptions emphasising the handlers function as a gatherer of information, such as “debriefed”.

### **6. *Detecting Deception.***

Deception has been described as, “... a successful or unsuccessful deliberate attempt, without forewarning, to create in another a belief which the communicator considers to be untrue” (Vrij, 2008, p.15). Consequently, any word or phrase placing an emphasis on truth or lies were included in this category. However, perhaps in response to the Butler Report and its emphasis on validating intelligence (Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 2005), there were a number of words or phrases that mentioned “validation”, “evaluation” or “corroboration” which were also included in this category. A number of participants also questioned the integrity of their informant, with several asking, “can they be trusted?”, or “are they just telling you what you want to hear?”. Such phrases clearly represented a consideration of deception and the handler’s requirement to detect it, therefore, they too were included in this category.

### **Descriptive Statistical Analysis.**

Responses to questions five and six (relating to the six thematic categories) were analysed using descriptive data. Specifically, in relation to the relative importance of each thematic category (question five: where the importance of each category was rated along a continuous visual analogue scale), mean scores and standard deviations were obtained, whilst frequency data were obtained to identify which thematic category participants believed required further research (question six). The categories were then ranked accordingly. The frequency data obtained following directed content analysis was also subjected to descriptive data analysis, to provide a percentage of how many words or phrases used related to each thematic category.

## Thematic Content Analysis.

Question 10 was far less directed than the others, and allowed participants to reflect on the topic of the questionnaire. Consequently, the responses to this question were subjected to Thematic Content Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Wilkinson, 2009). Specifically, each clause was analysed for an occurrence of a new thematic category not previously considered as part of the directed content analysis. It was envisaged that this form of analysis would permit an expansion of the research area if responses indicated it was necessary.

## Results

### *Directed Content Analysis*

Analysis of questions 1 to 4 (word association and main considerations) involved the categorisation of each word or phrase into one of the pre-determined thematic categories where it was perceived to represent a consideration of that category. This process resulted in frequency data for each pre-determined category which was then subjected to descriptive data analysis. Results found that words or phrases relating to gaining co-operation were referenced most frequently with 41.90% of all words used being in this category. Words relating to handler personality occurred with the least amount of frequency with only 2.97% of all words used being in this category. The total and average number of words or phrases referenced for each category across questions subjected to directed content analysis can be found in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Total and average number of words or phrases referenced for each thematic category across questions subjected to directed content analysis.

Thematic Area	Total number of words	Average number of words per respondent	% of total words
Gaining CHIS cooperation	564	16.59	41.90
Obtaining information	279	8.20	20.73
Rapport Building	231	6.79	17.16
Detecting CHIS deception	129	3.79	9.58
Understanding CHIS Motivation	103	3.03	7.65
Handler Personality Traits	40	1.18	2.97

Themes have been listed in descending order; the most popular category is at the top.

## *Descriptive Statistical Analysis*

Descriptive data analysis conducted on responses to question five (relative importance of each category) found that all categories received an average score above the midpoint (Range = 9.08 - 7.21) with detecting deception receiving the highest score. All scores (with SDs) are outlined in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 The average rated importance of individual thematic categories

Thematic Area	Mean Score (0-10)	Standard Deviation
Detecting CHIS Deception	9.08	1.93
Understanding CHIS Motivation	8.67	1.60
Rapport Building	8.66	0.99
Gaining CHIS Cooperation	8.51	1.93
Obtaining Information	8.22	2.37
Handler Personality Traits	7.21	2.02

Themes have been listed in descending order with the highest rated (most important) thematic area being shown at the top.

Descriptive data was also used to analyse responses to question six (which category requires more research). Again, the thematic category detecting deception was ranked highest by 42.42% of participants. Of note, all participants selected a category extrapolated from the extant research, with none of them selecting the *other* option. Full results are shown in Table 7.3, one participant chose not to make a selection, so the results shown are from the 33 participants who answered this question.

Table 7.3 Frequency data showing how often each thematic category was selected as requiring more scientific or psychological research to improve working practices

Thematic Area	Frequency	Percentage
Detecting CHIS Deception	14	42.42
Understanding CHIS Motivation	7	21.21
Handler Personality Traits	5	15.15
Gaining CHIS Cooperation	4	12.12
Rapport Building	2	6.06
Obtaining Information	1	3.03
Other	0	0

Themes have been listed in descending order with the highest rated (most important) thematic area being shown at the top.

## ***Thematic Content Analysis***

The final question, which allowed participants to add any further comments or to elaborate on their previous answers, was subjected to thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Wilkinson, 2009). The main objective was to identify any new thematic areas that had not been extrapolated from the literature review or explored as part of previous analyses. In total, 18 participants left a comment to the final question. Four new themes emerged as part of this process: (i) the importance of informants; (ii) matching informant and handler; (iii) training and support, and; (iv) interconnectivity of thematic categories.

### **The Importance of Informants.**

A number of participants identified the importance of informants, with one participant stating that, “CHIS is a vital element in any conflict whether a battle against a foreign power or an organised crime group” (#3), whilst another commented that informants were, “Integral and vital to good policing” (#13). The same respondent (#13) continued to identify what they believed made a good informant so unique, “No-one can get to the root of a problem quicker than someone who is linked in with the community or a certain demographic”, before summarising, “...they are an invaluable resource” (#13). Another participant expanded this theme, observing that informants and their handling are undervalued, blaming this on, “Populist politics and a desire to give the public a visible police presence which, whilst reassuring, has little genuine impact” (#33).

### **Matching Informant and Handler.**

One participant noted that whilst the survey asked about handler personality traits, “the personality of the CHIS is also critical” (#6). Where similar views were expressed, participants often linked these back to the importance of handler personality traits, or advice on how best to handle an informant such as treating them with “empathy and showing interest in their own personal everyday life” (#31) or, “be open, honest and professional from the outset” (#9). Another participant advocated matching the handler to the informant, observing that, “often the wrong handlers are put with the wrong CHIS” (#2), whilst another believed that successful informant handling, “needs a more psychological approach by the handler” (#6).

### **Training and Support.**

The need for a “psychological approach” was also identified by participants who commented on their training. They noted that during their training there was often an emphasis on the practical elements of informant handling, such as “tradecraft” and “writing the subsequent report” (#12), rather than psychological skills, such as establishing the kind of rapport that is “built-up over the period that you handle a CHIS” (#9), or detecting deception. As well as commenting on their training participants also observed that once in their role they often felt insufficiently supported. One participant commented that the handler’s role, “is rarely understood by senior ranks” and went on to note that there, “is little or no recognition of the stressful working conditions and the impact on family life” (#33). The theme of “stress” was repeated by other participants with one commenting that the “potential dangers are very real” (#27), whilst others advocated for, “periodic counselling/psychological debrief for handlers” (#23) or, “more psychological support of persons undertaking the role” (#14).

### **Inter-connectivity of Thematic Categories.**

It was especially noteworthy that many of those who responded to the final question used this opportunity to re-emphasise the importance of the thematic categories identified from the literature, with one participant noting that, “you asked which was the foremost consideration relating to a CHIS. The true answer should have been ‘all of the above’” (#30). However, what became evident from the responses to the final question was the inter-connectivity of the thematic categories. For example, one participant observed that, “recruiting and handling of CHIS is a difficult task requiring special skills” (#3), before noting that an important element in achieving this is human intuition. The same participant expands on this by explaining, “I knew when they were lying but I didn’t know why I knew” (#3). This answer tends to indicate that handler personality traits – or “human intuition” – can be a key contributor to both gaining co-operation and detecting deception. Another added support to the belief that personality traits were vital in gaining co-operation, stating that informants “would not exist without their initial successful recruitment” noting that “chance and circumstances will always play a part in this process [but] it cannot be denied that some handlers are more successful than others. Why is this?” (#10). Another highlighted the importance of understanding informant motivation to gaining co-operation, observing that, “If you don’t understand the motivation you don’t have a CHIS” (#5). Another respondent linked an understanding of motivation to detecting deception, stating that, “understanding motivation for providing information [is] of paramount important [sic] to gauge [whether] info provided is real and true” (#27). There would also appear to be conflict between some of the thematic categories, with some handlers perhaps having to balance competing requirements. Of particular concern seemed to be the

difficulty of maintaining rapport whilst managing other obligations. For example, one respondent commented on the requirement for handlers “to complete effective dynamic risk assessments ... whilst retaining rapport” (#16). Another made a similar observation, stating that, “Detecting deceit is a key skill which needs to be achieved without the aid of polygraphs as that destroys any trust [and] rapport that has been built over the length of the relationship” (#12).

## **Discussion**

Despite an increasing interest in HUMINT over the last two decades, there is a dearth of research that has examined the domestic situation within the UK. Previous studies seeking the views of dedicated informant handlers have tended to emphasise the importance of a single concept in isolation, such as rapport (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Nunan et al., 2020a) or information elicitation (Nunan et al., 2020b). The current study was able to utilise previous research to focus upon the specific legal and operational situation within the UK and to seek a broader range of practitioner perceptions. What is clear from this study is that informant handlers in the UK are affected by the same practical considerations as their HUMINT counterparts in other jurisdictions, however, they are often required to balance the need to build rapport and obtain information against the risk of a deceptive informant.

The aim of the survey was to identify the relative importance of identified categories to informant handlers, and whilst the survey confirmed their overall importance, participants found it difficult to discern which of them was most important. When asked to rate the importance of each one on a continuous scale, the average score for each category was well above the mid-point. Thematic content analysis of the final question validated this finding with several participants re-affirming the importance of one or more of the thematic categories identified. However, when forced to choose one of the pre-determined categories, participants selected *detecting deception* as both the most important consideration and the one requiring further research. Despite this finding, directed content analysis found that most words or phrases provided in response to the word association prompts and the free text response related to the concept of *gaining co-operation*. There are various possible explanations for this discrepancy. One could be that participants were expressing a difference between strategic and tactical considerations. The word association questions were specifically designed to prompt recollections of actual informant meetings involving handlers and informants, whereas a question asking about future research in particular, is likely to elicit a more strategic consideration of the issues affecting informant management. Consequently, it could be argued that the tactical considerations which most occupy a handler during a meeting, such as gaining co-operation and obtaining information, are very different from those that occupy their thoughts pre- and post- meeting such as detecting deceit and understanding informant motivation.

However, a further explanation is perhaps related to the concept of *deceit*. Detecting deception research, including that aimed at assisting HUMINT practitioners, has generally focussed on identifying a misrepresentation of fact, often pertaining to the specific actions of the interviewee themselves (for a review see, Vrij & Granhag, 2014). It was this concept of deceit that informed the categorisation of words or phrases subjected to directed content analysis, and undoubtedly this form of deception is of concern to practitioners, as almost 10% of all words or phrases recorded related to this category. However, content analysis identified another form of possible deception, namely, deceptive intent. This was exemplified by phrases such as “who’s running who?”, references to “danger” and “risk” and descriptions of informants as being “sneaky” and “unpredictable”. Given their association to informant compliance, these words and phrases were categorised as considerations of gaining co-operation, however, they could also be interpreted as considerations of deceptive intent.

An example of a human source with deceptive intent is provided by Hassan Yousef (Schirman, 2014; Yousef & Brackin, 2010). Yousef, a human source who reported on the activities of Hamas to the Israeli domestic intelligence agency, Shin Bet, states that the reason he originally began meeting with his handlers was to identify opportunities to murder them. In these circumstances, Yousef is not providing false information or actively lying to his handlers, but he is misrepresenting his intentions, posing as a co-operative source when he in fact harboured malicious intent. As one of the participants commented in the final survey question, even if such situations are relatively rare, “the potential dangers are very real” (#27). Consequently, whilst the finding that all of the identified categories were important to UK informant handlers adds support to previous HUMINT research, the current study identified a new category (deceptive or malicious intent) that has not previously been subjected to empirical research (at least in a HUMINT context).

### ***Strengths and Limitations of the Study***

As with all research, there are strengths and limitations to this study. Whilst the total size of the population of UK-based informant handlers cannot be ascertained, a sample size of 34 participants provides a demonstrable increase from much of the previous research, and is undoubtedly a strength of this study.

There are limitations to the sampling method employed. In particular, there is a risk that participants recruited as part of a snowball sample will be selected on the basis of sharing similar views and characteristics. To some degree this is perhaps unavoidable, after all informant handlers have self-selected for a specialist role within law enforcement and are likely to share some characteristics (Billingsley, 2009; Henry et al., 2019). Furthermore, given the covert nature of informant handling it was essential that participant anonymity was guaranteed as far as possible. Clearly, participants were

likely aware of colleagues who also completed the survey (i.e., whoever forwarded the survey to them), however, use of a snowball sample meant that participants identities were protected from the experimenters. Consequently, this method of sampling was deemed most appropriate and efficacious for gaining access to a population that is necessarily covert.

Given that the study was conducted online and identifying details were purposely excluded, it could be argued that not all the participants were qualified to respond, therefore a stringent inclusion/exclusion criterion was employed, with partially completed surveys being excluded from the dataset. Additionally, our dataset provides some evidence that participants represented an experienced sample of informant handlers; only 14.71% of participants stated that they had 5 or fewer years' experience as an informant handler, and whilst only 18 participants opted to *add any further comments* in the final question, those that did either directly referenced their own experience as an informant handler or demonstrated reflectivity of their own practical experience.

### ***Implications for Future Research***

A particular strength of this survey is that it introduces something new to the extant literature base. Four previous studies have sought the views of UK informant handlers (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Nunan et al., 2020a; Nunan et al., 2020b; Stanier & Nunan, 2021); however, this was the first to explore the relative importance of specified thematic categories. Researchers will be able to utilise the insights gained from this study to further explore these categories, and their impact on informant handling. The aim of this survey was to develop a framework of practitioner considerations that could be used to inform future research, and the findings provide a clear mandate for the development of a bespoke informant interview model designed to address these complex requirements.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter described a study involving the survey of current and former informant handlers in the UK. This study expands previous research by providing a more holistic insight into practitioner priorities and considerations. An awareness and understanding of these inter-connected and occasionally competing requirements can be used to develop a bespoke informant interview model that is better equipped to address a multitude of these objectives simultaneously, rather than simply considering them in isolation. However, given the unique power dynamic between handler and informant (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016), a truly holistic informant interview model ought to also have consideration for the objectives of the informant, and an understanding of how these may impact upon the disclosure of information. This will be considered in the next chapter.

## Chapter 8<sup>4</sup>

### Informant Narrative Analysis

#### Chapter Summary

The majority of HUMINT research conducted to date has considered HUMINT interactions from the perspective of the practitioner, and tends to address the question: how can the handler meet their intelligence objectives? However, it is recognised that an informant will have objectives of their own, and that handlers must be skilled at balancing their own objectives against those of the informant (Henry et al., 2019). Despite this, there is currently no research to explore how varying informant objectives are likely to influence HUMINT interactions. The current chapter will therefore outline a novel experimental paradigm whereby mock-informant objectives were manipulated – specifically, half of the mock-informant participants were required to deceive their handler. Mock-informants were instructed to either provide a truthful or deceptive account of a mock-conspiracy meeting they had attended. Mock-informant accounts were recorded, transcribed, and subjected to a triangulation of analysis: narrative identity analysis, narrative structure analysis, and smallest space analysis. Results indicate that mock-informants produce a gossip narrative and that deceptive mock-informants are more likely to adopt a low-potency narrative identity and utilise more emotive and evaluative comments than truthful mock-informants. By adopting a holistic approach to handler-informant interactions, and by specifically seeking methods of analysis capable of discerning the personal agendas of individual informants, an adaptive informant interview model can be developed that maximises the opportunities for practitioners to achieve their organisational goals.

#### Introduction

The situational dilemma of a tasked informant, as an active source of information capable of managing not only how much target information they disclose, but also how much target information they collect (or whether they collect it at all), provides them with a unique source of relational power over their handler (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016). This is likely to impact how a handler engages and interacts with an informant, and the ability to balance their own objectives against those of the informant is recognised as being a key attribute of a successful handler (Henry et al., 2019). Therefore, developing

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<sup>4</sup> Elements of this chapter were included in the below publication. The present author was the sole author of all material included in this chapter from this publication: Moffett, L., Oxburgh, G. E., Dresser, P., Watson, S. J., & Gabbert, F. (in press). Mapping the Lie: A Smallest Space Analysis of Truthful and Deceptive Mock-informant Accounts. Submitted to *The Police Journal: Theory, Practice and Principles*.

an informant interview model that is responsive to informant objectives is likely to benefit handlers whose primary aim is to achieve their own organisational objectives. However, it is recognised that identifying, understanding and managing the informant's objectives is not an easy task, and handlers believe that this may be something that cannot be trained (Henry et al., 2019). In an era of evidence-based policing, senior leaders are unlikely to be comfortable relying on the untrainable capabilities of individual handlers to manage their informant relationships and maximise their own objectives (Dresser, 2019; Palmer et al., 2019), therefore, a form of analysis that is capable of discerning various informant objectives would be beneficial to practitioners.

The practitioner survey conducted as part of this thesis (Chapter Seven) found that handlers in the UK rate *detecting deception* as their main consideration and the one requiring further research, and the dichotomy between truthful and deceptive informants would provide a clear variation in informant objectives. Taylor et al. (2013) found that differences in participant objectives (adopting the role of either loyal or disloyal employees) as part of an insider-threat paradigm resulted in measurable differences between *self-focus* and *social connectivity*. These concepts are similar to the "... two fundamental psychological constructs" of potency and intimacy (Youngs & Canter, 2012 p. 3), which Youngs and Canter have successfully used to determine narrative identity when profiling offenders through the use of narrative analysis.

A narrative can be described as any story containing a sequence of events, often linked by cause and effect, and narrative analysis is the qualitative analysis of any narrative account (Goddard & Carey, 2017; Reissman, 2008). This study will therefore extend previous research by conducting narrative analysis on a sample of mock-informant accounts, specifically, the current study will rely upon narrative structure analysis (Labov & Waletzky, 1997) and narrative identity analysis (Youngs & Canter, 2012) to examine the verbal content of truthful and deceptive accounts provided by participants in a mock-informant paradigm. It will be argued that narrative analysis may actually provide a more nuanced understanding not only of informant deception, but also of their varying levels of motivation and cooperativeness, considerations that practitioners also rated as being important (see Chapter Seven).

However, qualitative narrative analysis could be deemed as being non-falsifiable; for example, if an account is coded in terms of potency, it must necessarily be coded as being either high or low – it cannot be coded as having zero levels of potency. Consequently, there is the potential for experimenter bias to overstate the importance of particular findings (Rosenthal, 1963); something that could prove particularly problematic within applied research, with institutions often investing resources into the implementation of research findings (Oxburgh et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2012). To minimise the risk of experimenter bias, the triangulation of analysis is often recommended as a means of providing validity to qualitative results (Carter et al., 2014; Miller & Fox, 2009). There are various methods for conducting triangulation, including the use of different researchers / analysts, repeating analysis with a different data

set, interpreting results from the perspective of different theories or analysing the data set using multiple methodologies (Carter et al., 2014). For the current study, a multi-methodology approach was adopted, and whilst the combination of narrative structure and narrative identity analysis could already be deemed to provide a form of triangulation, it was decided to supplement the qualitative findings with a more quantifiable form of analysis. Consequently, the dataset was also subjected to smallest space analysis (SSA). Each form of analysis will be described in detail below.

### ***Narrative Structure Analysis***

A study of forensic accounts conducted by Guan and Zhang (2018) demonstrated the benefit of analysing the narrative structure of an account. An identifiable narrative structure was first recorded by Labov and Waletzky (1997), who observed that a normal narrative consists of several functional sections. These sections usually occur in a predictable sequence, and the model proposed by Labov and Waletzky has proven to be a robust one (Goddard & Carey, 2017; Johnstone, 2016; Labov, 2016; Reissman, 2008). Guan and Zhang applied this model to the examination of four statements all pertaining to the same criminal event to see how different parties (victim, suspect and witnesses) described it. They identified differences within the narrative structure of the accounts, depending on the goal of the narrator. In particular, they found that the suspect over stated the evaluative section of their narrative, and used it to apportion blame to their victim. Guan and Zhang's study suggests that the goal or objective of someone describing a criminal event affects how they employ the functional elements of a normal narrative. The functional elements of a normal narrative are outlined below:

#### **Originating Function.**

Most narratives begin with an originating function; this is not actually part of the narrative itself, but is the element that prompts the narrative, such as a question, and which the subsequent narrative seeks to address. In the case of a tasked informant, this is likely to be the explicit or implicit request for information about one or more of their associates.

#### **Abstract.**

Labov and Waletzky (1997) originally claimed that most narratives then begin with an orienting section, however, this was later amended in recognition of the fact that many (but not all) have an abstract prior to the orienting section (Johnstone, 2016). The abstract can perhaps be best understood as

performing the function of a newspaper headline, highlighting the gist of what is to follow whilst capturing the interest of the intended audience (Goddard & Carey, 2017).

### **Orienting Section.**

The orienting section is used to introduce the characters, location and context of the narrative. Although it orients the listener to the story environment, it also provides the narrator with credibility, by referencing familiar landmarks or other people who could validate their account. Although this section usually comes at the beginning, Labov and Waletzky (1997) accept that orienting clauses and comments can occur throughout the narrative.

### **Complication.**

The complication is a series of events linked by causality (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). It is this series of events that make up the main body of the narrative, consisting of a cluster of clauses (referred to as *narrative clauses*) in the central part of the story, and it is this section that defines the primary function of the narrative – it is the part where the narrator addresses the originating function (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). The complication is usually introduced by an initial narrative clause that all subsequent narrative clauses refer to; in essence, without this initial *complicating clause*, the rest of the narrative would not make sense (Labov & Waletzky, 1997).

The narrative might actually consist of numerous cycles of complications, each of which might end with a natural conclusion; however, the result of an individual complicating action does not necessarily mark the conclusion of the overall narrative. According to Labov and Waletzky (1997), a normal narrative cannot be resolved until there has been an evaluative section.

### **Evaluative Section.**

The evaluative section comprises of a series of clauses that are not bound by the sequence of causality, and it usually arrives just as the complicating action is reaching a climax. It is defined as the part of the narrative consisting of judgements, comments and symbology, as well as containing emotional and emotive content (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). Whilst not directly addressing the originating function, the evaluative section of the story is perhaps equally as important as the complication, as this is where the narrator justifies their reason for telling the story in the first place; it is what makes the story interesting (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). Like orienting clauses, evaluative clauses can actually occur at

any point in the narrative, but most often perform the function of suspending the action and delaying the revelation of the next section – the resolution.

### **Resolution.**

Labov and Waletzky (1997) simply define the resolution as the part of the narrative that follows the evaluative section. After the suspenseful pause of the evaluative section, the resolution tends to be comparatively succinct, and may be made up of narrative or evaluative clauses.

### **Coda.**

In many narratives, although not all, the resolution is itself followed by what Labov and Waletzky (1997) term the coda. This performs the function of bringing the narrative back up to date, it is not necessarily relevant to the rest of the narrative but performs a reflective function, clearly separating the events of the narrative from the present moment in time.

It should be noted that Labov and Waletzky (1997) examined narratives of personal experiences, and they are keen to point out that whilst they call this sequencing of functional elements the *normal* narrative structure, there are variations, often influenced by factors such as age and verbal ability; however, overall, there seems to be an innate understanding that this is how an orally produced personal experience narrative should be structured. However, whilst an informant may have experienced the contents of their account as an observer, and may even have taken an active part in the gathering of information, the account itself will be focussing on the actions and intentions of another person. Rather than being a personal experience narrative, an informant narrative will be closer to gossip, and there is no research to date examining whether a gossip narrative contains the same functional elements or conforms to the same narrative structure as a personal experience narrative.

### ***Narrative Identity Analysis***

Narrators adopt a narrative role, or identity (Goddard & Carey, 2017; Reissman, 2008). To identify narrative role in criminal offenders, Youngs and Canter developed the Narrative Action System Model, and focus on expressed levels of potency and intimacy (Youngs & Canter, 2009; 2012; Youngs, 2013). Potency is evident in the way an individual expresses their level of control or mastery over their environment, whilst intimacy is expressed through relations with others (either positive or negative), in particular how these relationships affect the narrator's own actions and behaviour. The interaction

between these two facets results in the enactment of one of four narrative roles: (i) a *hero's quest*; (ii) a *professional's adventure*; (iii) a *tragic hero's* account, and; (iv) a *victim's irony* (Youngs & Canter, 2009; Youngs, 2013).

### **Hero's Quest.**

When expressing a *hero's quest* narrative, the narrator possesses high levels of both potency and intimacy. In such a narrative they will outline a situation where they are especially conscious (and in control) of their actions, and specifically seek to affect the other people who feature in their account. As such, the narrator perceives themselves as being on a heroic quest (Youngs & Canter, 2009; 2012).

### **Professional's Adventure.**

Another alternative is one of high potency and low intimacy, where the offender expresses a high degree of mastery over their environment, but little concern for other people in the story. This results in an adventure narrative, with the offender portraying themselves as a professional (Youngs & Canter, 2009; 2012).

### **Tragic Hero.**

Where the narrator has low levels of both potency and intimacy they will be reacting to external events and will have little concern for the people affected by their actions. This results in a tragic narrative with the offender adopting the role of a tragic hero (Youngs & Canter, 2009; 2012).

### **Victim's Irony.**

Finally, the combination of low potency and high intimacy would be evidenced when the other characters involved are significant to the offender, but the offender themselves has no control over their personal circumstances; this would produce an ironic narrative where the offender assumes the identity of a victim (Youngs & Canter, 2009; 2012).

### ***Smallest Space Analysis (SSA)***

SSA has been used extensively in the profiling of offenders (Youngs, 2013), and is most commonly employed to categorise offenders on the basis of crime scene behaviours (i.e., Canter &

Fritzon, 1998; Fritzon et al., 2014; Goodwill et al., 2013; Hakkanen et al., 2004; Mokros & Alison, 2002). However, SSA has also been used to successfully distinguish between genuine and simulated suicide notes in a study undertaken by Ioannou and Debowska (2014). They began by conducting content analysis on both genuine and false suicide notes and found that content themes are, "...reflective of the psychological state of the writer" and are used to, "...construct ... narratives" (Ioannou & Debowska, 2014, p.157). Importantly, when subjected to SSA, there was an observable difference in content data between genuine and simulated notes (Ioannou & Debowska, 2014), indicating that SSA may be an appropriate form of analysis when attempting to identify deceptive narrative accounts.

SSA is a multi-dimensional scaling technique that can be used for visualising the distance between content data, based on their (dis)similarity to each other (Ioannou & Debowska, 2014; Shye, 2014). Interpretation of the SSA output is inductive, with the mapped space being partitioned into regions based upon the relationships between the content components (Shye, 2014). The faceted approach to interpreting an SSA is based on the assumption that the content data entered for analysis includes only a limited sample of data that could be representative of a particular facet, and that the space between data points still makes up part of the facet content. When using SSA in conjunction with the Narrative Action System (Youngs & Canter, 2009), the two facets of potency and intimacy would be expected to be evident in the data map, and the facet-content would be partitioned into regions representative of a *quest*, *adventure*, *tragedy* or *irony* narrative.

The use of SSA within investigative / forensic psychology has recently been called into question (Taylor, et al., 2012). Specifically, Taylor et al. argue that when the commonly used Jaccard's coefficient is employed, results derived from an analysis of crime scene behaviours are non-falsifiable. This is based on the observation that all data points are assumed to exist within a faceted region, and for the model to be falsifiable it would need to be possible to produce data that does not support one of the facets. This is compounded by the use of Jaccard's coefficient, which places a disproportionate value on frequency of occurrence. Taylor et al. recommend a conceptual approach to SSA interpretation, with the positioning of data points being interpreted conceptually rather than on the basis of frequency, whilst Shye (2014) emphasises the importance of using a 'correlation matrix' measuring the (dis)similarity of content data based on co-occurrence, rather than a dichotomous frequency score of present or absent. Therefore, the current study adopted both the conceptual approach recommended by Taylor et al., and the use of a correlation matrix, as recommended by Shye.

## ***The Current Study***

It was the aim of the current study to conduct explorative research analysing accounts provided by both truthful and deceptive participants in a mock-informant dilemma. A triangulated analysis, using narrative structure, narrative identity and SSA, was employed.

## **Method**

### ***Design***

A 2 (suspect / informant) x 2 (truthful / deceptive) between-groups design was used with participants being randomly allocated to one of four conditions: (i) truthful-suspect; (ii) truthful-informant; (iii) deceptive-suspect, and; (iv) deceptive-informant. Participants were allocated to the suspect / informant condition prior to the first experimental phase (mock-conspiracy) and were then further allocated to the second condition (truthful / deceptive) prior to the mock-interview phase. Only the informant condition (truthful and deceptive) has been analysed as part of the current study.

### ***Participants***

In total,  $N = 44$  participants took part in the study divided into 11 groups of four. The mock-informant condition comprised of  $N = 22$  participants (males  $n = 12$ ; females  $n = 10$ ) with a mean age of 47.23 years ( $SD = 16.33$ ), range 19 – 84 years. The remaining participants ( $N = 22$ ) performed the role of mock-suspects; their accounts were not subject to any further analysis as part of the current study. Participants were recruited from the community, via email campaigns at universities, gyms, and recreational clubs with the consent of department heads / senior managers.

### ***Materials***

A fictional case study was used to stimulate a role play scenario (Appendix G). Participants were informed that they were to attend a meeting with a group of animal rights activists to plan an ‘action’ at a pharmaceutical company warehouse. Mock-suspects were instructed to take a leading role in planning an act of minor criminal damage (graffiti), whilst mock-informants were instructed to show sufficient enthusiasm for the plan to maintain their cover without taking a leading role. Images and a map of the target warehouse (obtained from open-source searches) were provided to assist with the planning.

Additionally, mock-informants were informed that they would be reporting the proposed plan to their handler following the meeting.

The mock-interviews were conducted using a script designed to reflect the PEACE model of interviewing (CoP, 2019; see also Chapter 2). All mock-interviews were audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed for analysis.

### ***Procedure***

Participants took part in groups of four and all provided informed consent before being shown into the laboratory. The laboratory contained a table with four identical card folders and participants were asked to select one of these folders at random - each folder contained the role play stimulus outlining individual participant roles. These included either taking an active part in planning an act of criminal damage (mock-suspect) or showing sufficient enthusiasm for the plan in order to maintain cover as a police informant. There was nothing to distinguish these folders in any way and the experimenter was blind to individual roles. Participants were instructed not to discuss their role with any of the other group members and were given 15 minutes to conduct the mock-conspiracy phase of the experiment.

After 15-minutes, the mock-conspiracy was brought to an end and participants were given five minutes to prepare for an interview; mock-suspects were informed that they had been arrested and mock-informants were informed that they would be de-briefed by a mock-handler. One participant in each condition was instructed to tell the truth about the mock-conspiracy, the other was told to lie, specifically, deceptive mock-informants were told to inform their handler that the group was planning a terrorist attack. Mock-interviews were conducted in alphabetical order (by participant's first name) to ensure that the sequencing did not correspond in any way to the roles that had been allocated at random.

### ***Analysis***

Mock-interviews were transcribed, with an average number of words = 671.05 ( $SD = 372.25$ ). As analysis progressed, it became clear that one particular transcript (#4) was unsuitable for analysis, as the participant clearly did not understand the role play instructions. Thus, the final analysis was conducted on 21 transcripts, with 11 truthful and 10 deceptive mock-informant accounts.

### ***Narrative Structure Analysis***

Narrative structure analysis was conducted on the sample of transcripts throughout a number of phases: (i) data immersion; (ii) clause identification and coding; (iii) clustering of clauses into sections;

(iv) inductive qualitative analysis. This process resulted in descriptive data for the number and type of functional sections produced, and qualitative data pertaining to the interpretation of clause usage and overall structure.

### **Data Immersion.**

Data immersion was achieved by conducting detailed verbatim transcription of recorded interviews, followed by a process of re-familiarisation prior to coding the data. This involved re-reading the transcripts whilst referring back to original audio recordings for greater context and clarity where necessary.

### **Clause Identification and Coding.**

Each transcript was divided into individual clauses. A clause is defined as a grouping of words centred around a verb or verbal phrase (Thompson, 2004). A clause must contain at least a subject and a verb, but is not necessarily a complete sentence; the presence of a conjunction, such as ‘and’ or ‘because’, or a relative pronoun such as ‘that’ or ‘who’, often identifies the boundary of a clause. Having identified each individual clause they were then coded in accordance with one of the Labovian categories: abstract, orienting, narrative, evaluative, resolution, coda (Labov & Waletzky, 1997).

### **Clustering of Clauses.**

Labovian structural analysis is concerned with functional *sections* of the narrative, rather than the function of each individual clause. Therefore, once individual clauses had been coded, phase three required the coding of sections. Labov and Waletzky (1997) were able to inductively identify functional sections from lengthy extracts of orally produced personal experience narratives, however, the purpose of the current study was to identify variance between the conditions of truthful and deceptive mock-informants, therefore, it was decided to divide each narrative into ten equally sized sections; this would allow comparison across accounts of differing lengths. Subsequently, clauses were clustered into sections and each section was categorised in accordance with the dominant function of that section. For example, if each section consisted of three clauses and two of those performed an orienting function but one was an evaluative clause, then that section was classified as an orienting section. Where there was no clear majority then the section was judged to be a continuation of, and therefore coded identically as, the preceding section.

## **Inductive Qualitative Analysis.**

Inductive qualitative analysis focused on patterns and themes that emerged from the data as part of this analytical and methodological process, specifically, analysis was conducted to identify how functional elements of a narrative account were used by truthful and deceptive participants to achieve their differing objectives.

### ***An Example: Narrative 1 (Truthful).***

Although Narrative 1 (Appendix H) does not begin with an abstract or headline comment, the overall structure of Narrative 1 does appear to mirror the normal structure of personal experience narratives identified by Labov and Waletzky (1997).

Clauses 1 and 2 clearly perform an orienting function, with the narrator outlining their own role in the story, where the story takes place and who else was present (“yeah ok so I’m an undercover police officer and I attended this meeting for animal rights activists”). Clause 4 could have been categorised as being evaluative, as the narrator speculates about what may happen in the future; however, it can also be seen as providing context to the meeting, in that the purpose of the meeting was to plan an action: “we’re going to hit this erm it’s like a er animal testing warehouse”. Given its importance as a point of reference for subsequent narrative clauses, clause 4 has therefore been categorised as being part of the *complicating action*. The initial clause of the complicating action has also been referred to as the *temporal juncture* (Labov & Waletzky, 1997), however this phraseology highlights the fact that the original terminology was derived from narratives of previously experienced events. In this particular mock-informant paradigm, the source is discussing an action that is intended to occur in the future, consequently, whilst phrases such as *complicating action* or *temporal juncture* may not be wholly appropriate, clause 4 performs the same function as a temporal juncture in a personal experience narrative – it is the first clause to introduce the complication, all subsequent narrative clauses refer either directly or indirectly to the conspiracy that is first mentioned at clause 4, and the rest of the narrative would not make sense without this vital piece of information. Clause 4 can therefore be understood as an *initial complication*.

Following the initial complication, there is a sequence of narrative clauses (5-15); these clearly present a sequence of events that cannot occur, and which cannot be understood, without reference to an earlier clause, and therefore represent the cause-and-effect sequence of the complication section. Some of these clauses, such as 5, 6 and 7 (“now there are three other people who are going to be involved in this erm actual incident it’s planned for this Sunday it’s actually going to take place at seven o’clock”), have a direct relationship to clause 4, in that they refer directly to the subject raised in the initial complication, whilst others have an indirect relationship. For example, clause 10 (“he’s going to pick us

up in his car with all the equipment like bolt croppers and paint and everything like that”) refers directly to clause 9 (“three of us we’re going to be picked up by one of the people who’s involved in it”); however, the “it” referred to in clause 9 is a direct reference to the “hit” that was first introduced in clause 4.

Following the complication section (clauses 4-15), there is a short evaluative section. This is clearly identifiable from the phrase “I think” at the beginning of clause 16. Clauses 16 and 17 speculate about what might happen on the night of the incident and are much more speculative than clause 4, which clearly outlines the stated intention of the group. As with the evaluative section in a personal experience narrative, these clauses delay the revelation of the resolution, but also indicate the cognitive functions of the narrator. The narrator then states the resolution of the intended action between clauses 18-21; namely, that they intend to return to the train station and go their separate ways. Clause 22 (“and take the car basically”) is largely unnecessary, in that it does not address the primary function of the narrative and is effectively implied in the preceding clause, and therefore provides a good example of what Labov and Waletzky (1997) refer to as the coda.

### *Narrative Identity Analysis*

This analysis was conducted concurrently with narrative structure analysis, and therefore benefitted from the familiarity gained throughout that process. Transcripts were coded for perceived potency and intimacy.

Potency was defined in terms of how the mock-informant was able to achieve their objective, specifically, how they used their role (as a tasked informant) to obtain information. If they portrayed themselves as being pro-active in eliciting information, manipulating their environment and associates and was successful in their enterprise, then this was coded as demonstrating high levels of potency. However, if the mock-informant reported a sense of confusion, passivity or failure then this would represent low levels of potency. With regards to intimacy, if the mock-informant appeared concerned for, or particularly affiliated to their associates, then this would be classed as a high level of intimacy. However, if their primary concern appeared to be their own well-being and their own emotional state, then this was categorised as being low in intimacy. It was foreseeable that levels of potency and intimacy would vary throughout an individual narrative; in these instances the most dominant feature determined the categorisation of being either high or low. The combination of high / low potency / intimacy resulted in one of the four narrative identities observed by Youngs and Canter (2012) (identity: hero / tragedy / professional / victim).

### **An Example: Narrative 11 (Truthful).**

Narrative 11 (Appendix H) is a lengthy account consisting of multiple complications; however, the narrator uses evaluative comments to conclude each narrative cycle (at clauses 57 and again between 112-113) providing an indication of the importance they place on their own evaluations. Indeed, many of the evaluative comments that feature throughout the narrative indicate the high degree of potency that this narrator feels. They are happy to insert their own words and phrases (clauses 37 [“that’s my own word”] and 42 [“I’m going to use my own phrase”]) in the belief that this will benefit the overall narrative, and the evaluative comments that feature between clauses 61-94 effectively describe how the narrator manipulated the conversation: clauses 65, 74 and 78-79 outline how the narrator avoided a task they did not want to do, whilst clauses 85-87 outline why they decided to accept a different task. Interestingly, these evaluative clauses can still be read without any of the interluding narrative clauses:

- 65      why did I refuse
- 74      even if I was just a normal member of the bloody public
- 78      that isn’t going to happen in a million years
- 79      not a problem for me to say I’m not doing that
  
- 85      because I thought it might be good evidence
- 86      you know if at some point I find myself in court giving evidence about this
- 87      then if they want me to take photographs of it great

Indeed, even the resolution begins with the narrator manipulating the group to reveal their plans (clause 99: “so I said so what is it we’re supposed to be doing then”).

In terms of intimacy, the narrator appears to vacillate between describing themselves as part of the group and as being separate from them; this is best expressed in clause 58, where the narrator is re-orienting themselves to discuss what actually occurred during the meeting, here the narrator begins by asking, “do you need to know how *we* got to those”, before correcting themselves to say, “how *they* actually *they* actually got to those decisions”. The narrator also seems to minimise the role of “the girl” in the narrative – she is not named and is only briefly described as wearing a pink shirt. This is not the case for the two males, both of whom are named and described in rather disparaging terms, the first being described as a “little fellow” (a later comment at clause 33 states that there was an issue with sizing the overalls) and the second is initially described as “really old and fat”, before the narrator adopts a more objective approach, and tempers the description. Indeed, the second male’s actions are also described in negative terms – he was “dishing out tasks” and “barking out ... orders” – and the narrator could not

“pin him down”. Indeed, the narrator’s view of the second male is perhaps the best indication of the degree of intimacy they feel towards the group, as this male is clearly described as the leader with the other group members almost unquestioningly following his directions (see clauses 18 and 19), thereby being tainted by association.

It could be argued then, that the narrator does not feel any kind of intimacy towards the group, as they clearly hold the other group members in low esteem. However, intimacy does not only refer to a positive regard for others; in its broadest sense, intimacy means that the closeness and familiarity of the other characters affected the narrator’s own actions and behaviour. It could therefore be concluded that the narrator feels a high degree of intimacy for this group; the narrator appears to be protective of the female and is clearly affected by – and perhaps even jealous of – the two males.

Youngs and Canter (2012) conclude that a narrator who expresses high levels of potency and high levels of intimacy will adopt the role of a romantic hero in a quest narrative. On first reading, this would not seem to be the case for narrative 11. The section between clauses 66-68 clearly outline how the narrator perceives their role within the meeting (“well as you know I am an undercover police officer so I can’t agree to this conspiracy and I certainly can’t act as agent provocateur”) and the ensuing sequence of actions describes how they manage to fulfil their role. This has all the hallmarks of a professional narrative identity. However, in a criminal narrative, the romantic quest is expressed as a *revenge mission* (Youngs & Canter, 2012). When interpreted this way, the narrative does begin to conform to a high potency, high intimacy mission of vengeance. This is perhaps best evidenced by the fact that the resolution is concluded with two evaluative clauses identifying criminal offences committed or intended by the group (“so it looks to me what they’ve agreed to do between them is to commit criminal damage and maybe criminal trespass”). These comments place an onus on the mock-handler to take action against the group, and may well represent the kind of vicarious vengeance typical of a heroic informant on a vengeful quest.

### ***Smallest Space Analysis***

SSA was conducted by following the procedure utilised by Ioannou and Debowska (2014), beginning with a Thematic Analysis (TA; Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the transcripts. TA is a method of organising qualitative data into thematic categories and is conducted over a series of phases: (i) data familiarisation; (ii) generation of codes; (iii) searching for themes; (iv) reviewing themes; (v) defining themes, and; (vi) producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### **Familiarisation and Generating Codes.**

Familiarisation of the data involved re-reading transcripts and dividing them into segments of speech. An inclusive data-driven approach to coding was adopted (Braun & Clarke, 2006), meaning that a new segment was created whenever a new idea was expressed, with each segment being coded in accordance with that concept. As such, this form of coding represents a constructivist approach, whereby the development of categories was based on the accounts of participants, rather than experimental preconceptions (Yin, 2014).

### **Searching for Themes.**

Coded segments of data were collated into a visual thematic map, with links connecting thematically similar codes. This allowed initial codes to be reviewed within the context of the entire dataset, and resulted in the emergence of 21 initial themes.

### **Reviewing Themes.**

The entire dataset was re-coded to reflect these initial 21 themes. This allowed the initial themes to be reviewed holistically, to ensure that each data point was accurately represented by one or more of the identified themes. This process resulted in the amalgamation of several thematic codes; for example, deception clearly formed part of the conspirators tactical approach to achieving their aims, therefore, an initial code of *group tactics* was amalgamated with *group deception*, and codes that initially adopted a chronological categorisation (i.e., *self in meeting* and *self post-meeting*) were incorporated into more universal codes, such as *self as a CHIS* and *self reflection*.

### **Defining the Themes.**

Ultimately, 16 thematic codes were identified to represent the dataset; these were further categorised into three main themes. The organisation of thematic categories is displayed in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1: Themes and sub-themes identified through thematic analysis

Main Theme	Sub-Theme
Group	Members
	Motives
	Cohesion
	Deception
Self	Evaluation (Pos)
	Evaluation (Neg)
	As an informant
	Role in Action
	Emotional response
Action	Pre-Action
	Practicalities
	Post-Action
	Event (Protest)
	Event (Publicity)
	Event (Damage)
	Event (Violence)

Each theme will be described in more detail below, with examples of sub-themes provided for additional clarity. The examples consist of quotes taken from the sample of participants with the coding shown bracketed in bold.

***Main Theme 1: Group.***

This theme included any reference to the group, and included sub-themes of members, motives, cohesion and deception.

### *Sub-Theme 1a – Members*

This sub-theme included any reference to group members, including the size of the group, group hierarchy or an identified leader, the name of one or more group members, descriptions of one or more group members, or the roles that they undertook during the meeting or intend to undertake during the action, Narrative 18 provides an example (names have been anonymised):

Okay in my group there were four individuals including myself (**group size**) there was a guy called ALPHA, somebody called BRAVO and somebody called CHARLIE (**names group members**) just taken at face value the leader of the group seemed to be ALPHA erm who had a very clear idea about what needed to be done and when and how (**identified group leader**) backed up by BRAVO who seemed to have a very clear idea of erm what she thought needed to be done to back up what ALPHA was projecting (**group hierarchy**) CHARLIE said little erm but was clearly I think erm anti-violence and anti- erm doing anything too much untoward (**role / intent**) (Participant #18).

### *Sub-Theme 1b – Motives*

This sub-theme encompasses the group ideology, their specific or strategic aims and objectives for the intended action, or even the tactical concerns (i.e., the presence of security) which affect their planned action.

I attended this meeting for animal rights activists (**group ideology**) and what we're going to do is we're going to hit this erm it's like a er animal testing er warehouse (**group aims / objectives**) (Participant #1).

### *Sub-Theme 1c – Cohesion*

This included references to any agreement or disagreement among the group, for example:

but the level of disruption that was going to be caused was a bit in debate erm so there were three different things really that got mentioned (**disagreement / cohesion**) (Participant #6).

### *Sub-Theme 1d – Deception*

Any references to the group practicing some form of deception (i.e., pretending to plan for a protest when they actually intend to commit a terrorist attack), were categorised under this sub-theme.

that's what they're going to say but the truth is (**group deception**) they're going to take take erm explosives in there (**violence**) (Participant #12).

## ***Main Theme 2: Self.***

This theme covered any topics where the mock-informant referred to themselves. Sub-themes include evaluation, self-reflection, as an informant, role for action, and emotional response.

### *Sub-Theme 2a – Evaluation*

Although evaluative remarks were made about the group, they were categorised as a sub-theme of *self* as they were the personal evaluations of the mock-informant. These evaluations were further coded as either *positive* (i.e., the group did something well) or *negative* (i.e., the group were confused or chaotic).

but it struck me that they haven't really decided what that thing was erm what their long-term aim was erm how they're going to do it and obviously there's three very different characters aside from me (**evaluation – negative**) (Participant #3).

### *Sub-Theme 2b – Self-Reflection*

This refers to the mock-informant reflecting on their own performance during the meeting, gaps in their knowledge and possible reasons for why their knowledge might be incomplete, for example:

I think they decided that we'd meet at night time (**gap in knowledge**) don't remember the time if time was eventually discussed it was that chaotic (**reason for gap in knowledge**) (Participant #3).

### *Sub-Theme 2c – As an Informant*

This relates to the narrator either directly addressing their role as a police informant, or demonstrating an awareness of their role, either through the description of their thought process during the meeting, or of their actions and attempts to manipulate the meeting in alignment with their role. It also includes attempts to negotiate with their handler in their role as a mock-informant.

why did I refuse well as you know I am an undercover police officer so I can't I can't agree to this conspiracy and I certainly can't act as agent provocateur (**role as informant**) so what I did say is right out in front of everybody that I weren't going to do it why should I be doing that they want me to buy all the paint even if I was just a normal member of the bloody public they want me to buy all the paint me to go over the fence and me to do the graffiti that isn't going to happen in a million years not a problem for me to say I'm not doing that I said if you want the paint go buy your own paint so erm they agreed to buy their own paint (**manipulation as informant**) (Participant #11).

### *Sub-Theme 2d – Role for Action*

This refers to the mock-informant outlining the task they had been assigned by the group, for example:

I would be the driver (**role in action**) (Participant #5).

### *Sub-Theme 2e – Emotional Response*

Whenever the mock-informant expressed an emotional response, either to their personal situation or dilemma as a covert police informant, or in response to the proposed action by the group, this was categorised as *emotional response*. Fear, concern, or feeling trapped were the emotions most commonly expressed:

Well look I'll be totally honest [inaudible] I'm quite worried about what we discussed at the meeting (**concern**) don't know I think you know I don't want any kind of part really about (**reluctance / fear**) the only thing is though is as the plan's evolved I've kind of become more and more entrenched in that (**trapped**) (Participant #2).

### *Main Theme 3: Action.*

This refers to any reference to the planned or proposed action that was discussed during the meeting. Sub-themes include pre-action, practicalities, post-action and event.

### *Sub-Theme 3a – Pre-Action*

This encompasses a list of phases which need to be undertaken in order to conduct the main event, such as reconnaissance, rendezvous, approach and gain entry. It also includes any planning phases, and any other preparation, such as sourcing vehicles, for example:

we agreed to meet in a pub there was a pub nearby just over the road I believe (**pre-action rendezvous**) (Participant #8).

### *Sub-Theme 3b – Practicalities*

References to practical elements such as clothing, timing, equipment and the layout of the target premises were included in this sub-theme.

early evening meet in this pub (**timing**) wearing dark clothing (**clothing**) and we were going to have a van with all the stuff in one of the gang was going to get some sturdy wire cutters (**equipment**) (Participant #8).

### *Sub-Theme 3c – Post-Action*

This sub-theme encompasses any actions that would be taken after the event, and tended to focus on escape or exit strategies:

we're planning to then get back into the vehicle and head back to the train station the three of us will be dropped off and then G will drive off and take the car basically (**escape / exit strategy**) (Participant #1)

### *Sub-Theme 3d – Event*

The sub-theme of *event* refers to the main event that was planned during the meeting. Four alternatives were coded, these were *protest* (i.e., banners), *publicity* (i.e., taking images or inviting press coverage), *damage* (i.e., graffiti), and *violence* (often acts involving terrorism / explosives).

what else erm oh yeah the plan is that if we can get the banners up glued on to the side of the building er at night (**protest**) then the plan is if that goes well to then return with the press the next morning er to get obviously publicity for the cause (**publicity**) (Participant #7).

get to the front and graffiti the whole place and then erm that would be all (**damage property**) (Participant #9).

they're going to attack the warehouse (**violence**) and they're going to kill anyone in sight (**murder / violence**) (Participant #14).

### Producing the Report.

Having conducted thematic coding, a tally chart was created for each individual transcript recording the presence or absence of each coded category within that transcript. This was then transposed onto a matrix, where the co-occurrence of each category was scored on a dichotomous scale (1 = both categories are present; 0 = no co-occurrence of categories). A master matrix was produced for the entire dataset whereby a higher score represented more occasions of co-occurrence and a lower score represented fewer occasions of co-occurrence (see Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1: Matrix showing frequency score for co-occurrence of thematic categories across the entire dataset.

	Member	Motives	Cohesion	Deceptio	Evaluatio	Evaluatio	Reflectio	As a CHIS	Role for	Emotion	Pre-Acti	Practical	Post-Act	Protest	Publicity	Damage	Violence
Members	0	7	5	3	3	5	9	9	4	3	14	11	5	3	4	6	5
Motives		0	5	2	2	4	6	6	1	2	10	7	4	4	3	4	2
Cohesion			0	0	0	4	4	4	2	1	7	4	2	3	4	5	0
Deception				0	2	1	2	2	0	2	4	4	1	0	0	0	3
Evaluation (Pos)					0	1	3	3	0	3	4	4	1	0	0	0	4
Evaluation (Neg)						0	5	5	2	1	6	3	1	3	3	3	1
Reflection							0	10	2	3	11	9	4	3	4	4	5
As a CHIS								0	3	5	12	10	4	2	3	6	5
Role for Action									0	1	4	2	1	1	1	3	0
Emotion										0	5	5	2	0	0	2	3
Pre-Action											0	17	5	4	4	7	9
Practicalities												0	5	2	3	5	9
Post-Action													0	2	2	3	1
Protest														0	2	1	0
Publicity															0	3	0
Damage																0	0
Violence																	0

## Results

### *Narrative Structure Analysis*

#### Descriptive Data.

Each narrative account was divided into ten sections. Percentages were obtained to assess the majority function of each section (abstract / orienting / narrative / evaluative / coda). Based upon these percentages the majority of mock-informant narratives can be expected to begin with an orienting section (71.4%), followed by a further orienting section (61.9%). Section 3 saw the majority of mock-informants (71.4%) shift to a complication section, a trend that continued into section 4 (61.9%), section 5 (81.0%),

section 6 (61.9%), section 7 (66.7%) and section 8 (61.9). Section 9 saw an almost even split between complications (42.9%) and evaluative sections (38.1%), before the majority of mock-informants ended the narrative at section 10 with a resolution (38.1%).

However, there was variation between truthful and deceptive mock-informant accounts. Results indicate that for section 1, 90.0% of truthful mock-informants began their account with an orienting section, whereas only 54.5% of deceptive mock-informants began with an orienting section, with the remaining 45.5% using an abstract. Analysis of section 3 revealed that 100.0% of truthful mock-informants had progressed into a complication section by that stage of their narrative, compared to only 45.5% of deceptive mock-informants. The remaining deceptive mock-informants produced either an orienting section (45.5%) or an evaluative section (9.1%). For section 9, most mock-informants either expressed a complication section or an evaluative one; however, more deceptive mock-informants produced an evaluative section (45.5%) than a complication (36.4%), whereas more truthful mock-informants produced a complication section (50.0%) than an evaluative one (30.0%).

### **Qualitative Analysis.**

Inductive qualitative analysis was conducted to examine some of the variation in the use of functional clauses between truthful and deceptive mock-informants. For example, it was observed that not a single truthful participant began their narrative with an abstract clause, whereas 50% of deceptive participants opened their narrative with an abstract. Therefore, understanding why a deceptive mock-informant might use an abstract at the beginning of their account could provide a useful insight for practitioners.

Narrative 12 (deceptive) was noteworthy due to both the presence of an abstract, and the number of evaluative clauses that it contained. The abstract section presented the listener with a gist headline of the narrative that the mock-informant was about to outline: “Okay, so the meeting was brought together to discuss an attack on the animal rights building” (Participant #12). Significantly, this abstract section contained the first deceptive clause. Indeed, only two clauses within this narrative contained any obvious deception at all – albeit, the evaluative comments and emotional context of the narrative are likely to be deceptive. These two clauses are number 2, which forms part of the abstract at the outset of the narrative, and number 34, which is the final clause of the complication section. The positioning of these deceptive comments seems significant. The first deception is rather ambiguous, the mock-informant refers merely to “an attack”, and there is a sense that the placing of this within a headline comment may provide the mock-informant with an opportunity to gauge the interviewer’s response whilst steeling themselves for a more detailed fabrication later on. Indeed, the rest of the narrative, between clause 2 and 34, could be interpreted as the mock-informant procrastinating, building their courage and engaging the sympathies

of the listener before presenting the more significant lie that “they’re going to take explosives” right at the end of the complication section – the rest of which would appear to be a truthful account of what was discussed in the meeting.

Narrative 13 (deceptive) also begins with an abstract. It is an extremely concise narrative, however, although it is both short and vague, the opening clause (“there was this terrorist”) appears to perform the function of a headline comment. Although it could have been categorised as an orienting comment, the function of this clause is not to orient the listener by referencing a particular place or time, rather, the primary function of this clause is to draw the listener’s attention to the presence of a “terrorist”. This prepares the listener for the detail of the complication section that follows. Although the term “terrorist” is broad and wide ranging, this is in effect a deceptive clause. The use of the word “terrorist” is repeated in the second clause with reference to a “terrorist attack”. None of the truthful mock-informants used this word or phraseology and the connotations of a “terrorist attack” are more serious than the criminal damage that was actually discussed. The abstract at clause 1 therefore lays the groundwork for succeeding clauses (in particular 2 and 6) where the deception is reinforced by the use of the word “attack”.

A further example of the use of an abstract can be found in narrative 17. Despite being a deceptive account, narrative 17 does not contain any obvious deception. The opening comment acts as an abstract or headline, providing the gist of what occurred during the meeting: “we were discussing basically er different routes”. Initially, narrative 17 appears extremely brief and incomplete, however, it actually conforms to a normal narrative structure, and it is in fact its incompleteness that represents the deception. Rather than including a known untruth, this mock-informant appears to exclude pertinent detail, and it is the use of an abstract at the outset of the narrative that allows them to achieve this brevity. In essence, they said everything they wanted to say in the opening comment.

Narrative 20 (deceptive) begins with an abstract that directly addresses the most important aspect of the meeting, that “the group are planning a terrorist attack”. This is also a deception. Although this is followed by two orienting clauses, which ought to serve the function of orienting the listener and establishing the narrator’s credibility, these only orient the listener to the advanced nature of the planned attack. Indeed, the direct nature of this particular narrative, which is encapsulated by the opening abstract clause, leaves the impression that it is a complete fabrication.

Narrative 22 (deceptive) also begins with an abstract containing a deceptive comment, that the group were planning a “terrorist attack”. After delivering this initial deception there is then an impression that the mock-informant simply wants to end the interview. They follow the abstract with a large orienting section, much of which refers to the roles adopted during the meeting, in particular their own role and that of the “main organiser”. This orienting section is interrupted by another deceptive comment at clause 5, mentioning that the group intend to “blow the place up”. This clause contains more detail

than the abstract, consequently, it could be interpreted that the abstract is an initial attempt to test their deception and observe any adverse reaction from the handler. Indeed, mention of an unspecified “terrorist attack” allows the narrator to back track if challenged, however, having gained confidence from the lack of challenge they are able to follow it up with further details four clauses later.

Overall, it would appear that abstract clauses were used by deceptive mock-informants to affect their deception, either through a direct lie, or by seeking to restrict the length and content of the overall narrative.

It is also noteworthy that deceptive mock-informants tended to use more evaluative comments throughout their narratives. Narratives 12 and 18 are good exemplars of how evaluative remarks were used.

Narrative 12 (deceptive) employs a lengthy evaluative section near the beginning of their account:

I think they've probably been quite good at maybe covering some of their tracks and maybe what their real intention is. So what you might, what we all probably thought, was maybe like domestic extremism, that type of activity, how like, that's not what they're about, they're using that as a front really, to sort of keep us off what they're really up to, and I fear that there's probably going to be quite a significant attack on that building, and I don't think that it's about the animals, I just think they're using that as a front really (Participant #12).

This section precedes the first orienting remark, which does not arrive until clause 13. Labov and Waletzky (1997) observe that an evaluative section often serves to delay the resolution, with its primary function being to generate tension and engage the listener. The first evaluative section of this narrative appears to serve similar functions, by delaying the revelation of any meaningful detail. Additionally, the mock-informant uses this opening evaluative section to introduce some powerful emotionality. Towards the end of the section, after a number of suppositions and assumptions typified by the repeated use of “I think” and “maybe”, the mock-informant reaches the predominant purpose of the section at clause 10, with the phrase “I fear”. The introduction of “fear” is likely to engage the listener and generate tension prior to the main complication section. Towards the end of their account the mock-informant introduces another lengthy evaluative section. Again, this section can be seen as an attempt to increase the tension and the sense of urgency. Not only does the mock-informant again reference their own concern (“my worry”), they also portray the conspirators as being reckless and volatile – “they don't care”, “they're quite hot headed” and “quite impulsive”. There is a short resolution where the mock-

informant attempts to excuse the lack of detail contained in their account, followed by a coda, however, given the quantity of preceding evaluative clauses, these are too insignificant to form a distinct section.

The mock-informant responsible for narrative 18 presents an interesting strategy for practicing deception. Initially, they begin with an apparently true account of what occurred during the meeting. This makes up approximately half of the overall narrative – 38 clauses from a total of 72. The second half of the narrative would appear to be an almost complete fabrication. Such a strategy can fulfil two functions for the deceiver: Firstly, it allows them to monitor the interviewer for any signs of incredulity or doubt before choosing whether or not to progress with the actual deception (Burgoon & Buller, 1994). Secondly, it allows the narrator to establish a baseline of behaviour consistent with truthfulness that may serve to bolster their credibility (Vrij, 2008), especially if the interviewer is able to verify any of the account – they would find at least fifty per cent of the account to be verifiable, and may therefore be more likely to accept the parts that cannot be proven (Nahari et al., 2014). However, by establishing a truthful baseline, this strategy allows the interviewer to observe any changes between truthful and deceptive themes within an account (Palena et al., 2019).

On first examination, narrative 18 would appear to lack a definable evaluative section. There are only ten evaluative clauses from a total of seventy-two, and two of these ten are co-located at the very end of the narrative. By contrast, there is a large number of orienting clauses. However, given the strategy employed by this deceiver, there is value in separating their narrative to compare the truthful portion with the deceptive portion (Palena et al., 2019). Interestingly, the majority of the orienting clauses occur in the first half of the narrative, the truthful half, whilst the majority of evaluative clauses occur in the second half of the narrative, the deceptive half. In a real-world situation, it could be assumed that a practitioner would not expect or seek to compare two halves of a single narrative, however, in this instance it seems a natural thing to do as the first half is a perfect example of a *normal* narrative (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). However, the second half of the narrative does not adhere to a normal narrative structure. The deceptive half of narrative 18 begins with a cluster of evaluative clauses, and the first deception – that the conspirators “want to make a bit of a splash” – is introduced in their midst. This half of the narrative then ends with another rather compelling evaluative section, with the mock-informant telling their handler that “something needs to be done”. Given the overall lack of evaluative clauses, this summarising comment seems particularly forceful, and appears designed to engage the handler’s emotional processing, rather than a more critical thought process.

It can be seen from these examples that evaluative comments can be used, at least within the context of a deceptive mock-informant account, to increase tension and emotionality. This may add support to the observations made by Peace and Sinclair (2012), that deceivers use emotional content to distract the listener and to engage their sympathies.

### *Narrative Identity Analysis*

Six out of 11 truthful participants expressed a high potency role, whereas only two from ten deceptive participants were coded as being high in potency. One of these was the deceptive mock-informant who produced Narrative 18; as already seen, this was a particularly unusual narrative, as the mock-informant adopted the strategy of producing an account with a completely truthful first half followed by a deceptive second half.

To some extent, the strategy adopted by this mock-informant confounds their narrative identity. There is a clear sense of their high level of potency during the early stages of the narrative; they unequivocally place themselves within the meeting in the opening sentence, and progress to outline their role as an “undercover plant” – and apparent success at fulfilling this role. This seems to lessen somewhat in the second half of the narrative, though. Although the mock-informant still uses phrases such as “I managed” and “I established” there is far greater use of the phrase “I think”, emphasising that there is some doubt in the information they are reporting and, by implication, their success. Despite this though, the overall impression is of someone with a high degree of potency.

Narrative 21 is the other deceptive narrative that was coded as being high in potency. This mock-informant expresses their potency in the opening sentence, stating, “I got involved in that group, the animal activists, as I was meant to” (Participant # 21).

The first part of that statement, that they were able to join a group of activists, indicates high levels of potency; however, the second part detracts from this somewhat, by emphasising that it was not their choice to join the group, it was something that they were “meant to” do. The subsequent narrative is then dominated by the mock-informant’s own speculations, and whilst they seem to take no active role in the meeting or planning itself, they clearly feel as though their own opinions are worthy of being expressed. Combined with the importance of the opening sentence, it should therefore be interpreted that this mock-informant is expressing high levels of potency.

However, given that narratives 18 and 21 are the exceptions amongst deceptive mock-informants, there is also value in examining the exceptions amongst the truthful participants (Reissman, 2008), namely, those who expressed low potency roles. The first of these was narrative 2. Within this narrative, it is the emotional content that provides the most obvious indication of the narrative identity. Although there is a high degree of self-focus, this tends to emphasise the mock-informant’s own fears and vulnerabilities. Therefore, the level of potency expressed by this mock-informant is low – they feel as though they have become “entrenched” in a plan almost against their will, and seem heavily reliant on the listener (their handler) to “kind of like work out what happened”, “pull the stops out” and, most importantly, make sure that nothing “comes back” on them. A further interesting feature of this narrative are references to “the girl”. The girl is first mentioned at the end of a long, highly emotive section of the

account; something mirrored towards the end of the narrative, where “the girl” is mentioned immediately before another lengthy, emotive section of the narrative. The fact that “the girl” is mentioned in such proximity to the two most emotive sections of the narrative perhaps indicates a high level of intimacy towards her.

Low levels of potency and high levels of intimacy produce a narrative identity akin to a victim, an identity expressed at the outset of the narrative when the mock-informant says: “Well look I’ll be totally honest, I’m quite worried about what we discussed at the meeting ... I don’t want any kind of part really” (Participant #2), and again, when they end their account by saying: “I’m in a very delicate situation okay, so I’m letting you know what the score is, but again I can’t have anything coming back to me otherwise it’s not going to work, do you understand?” (Participant #2).

There are aspects of this running throughout the narrative, with the narrator consistently portraying themselves as a powerless victim of their situation, concerned by their own reputational standing within the group and the consequences of anything “coming back” on them.

This raises a further potential influence not previously considered as part of the truthful-deceptive dichotomy. By placing “the girl” closest to the most emotional sections of the narrative, the mock-informant highlights her importance. Whilst the mock-informant is being truthful in relaying the sequence of intended actions, the narrative role expressed by the mock-informant may be the result of divided loyalties. In essence, the mock-informant may feel more loyalty to “the girl” than to the handler. The final reference to “the girl” perhaps serves to highlight this; not only does the positioning of the sentence draw the listener’s attention back to her situation, but the mock-informant minimises her role in the intended incident – whilst the others will be involved in cutting holes in fences and spray painting a building, “the girl” will simply be the lookout throughout.

Despite its brevity, Narrative 5 (truthful) also displays low levels of potency, with the mock-informant beginning the narration by stating that “we agreed”, before outlining their own agreed duties as part of the conspiracy – the impression being that, because it was agreed, the mock-informant themselves was powerless to affect the situation. The mock-informant also expresses high levels of intimacy – they name “Laura”, and although the other group members are simply referred to as “the other two” the mock-informant often uses the term “we” and “everyone”, indicating that they identify themselves as part of the group. This then, is another victim narrative. However, what this particular narrative indicates, and what an analysis of the narrative identity acknowledges, is the nuanced dilemma that could be faced by a real-life informant, namely, the requirement to be truthful whilst protecting their friends (Granhag et al., 2015). It is clear that the mock-informant is uncomfortable in their role and feels a greater sense of loyalty to the group than to their handler; consequently, despite being asked to provide a truthful account, the brevity of their narrative allows them to practice a mild form of deception (by withholding information; Vrij, 2008), resulting in a low-potency high-intimacy narrative identity.

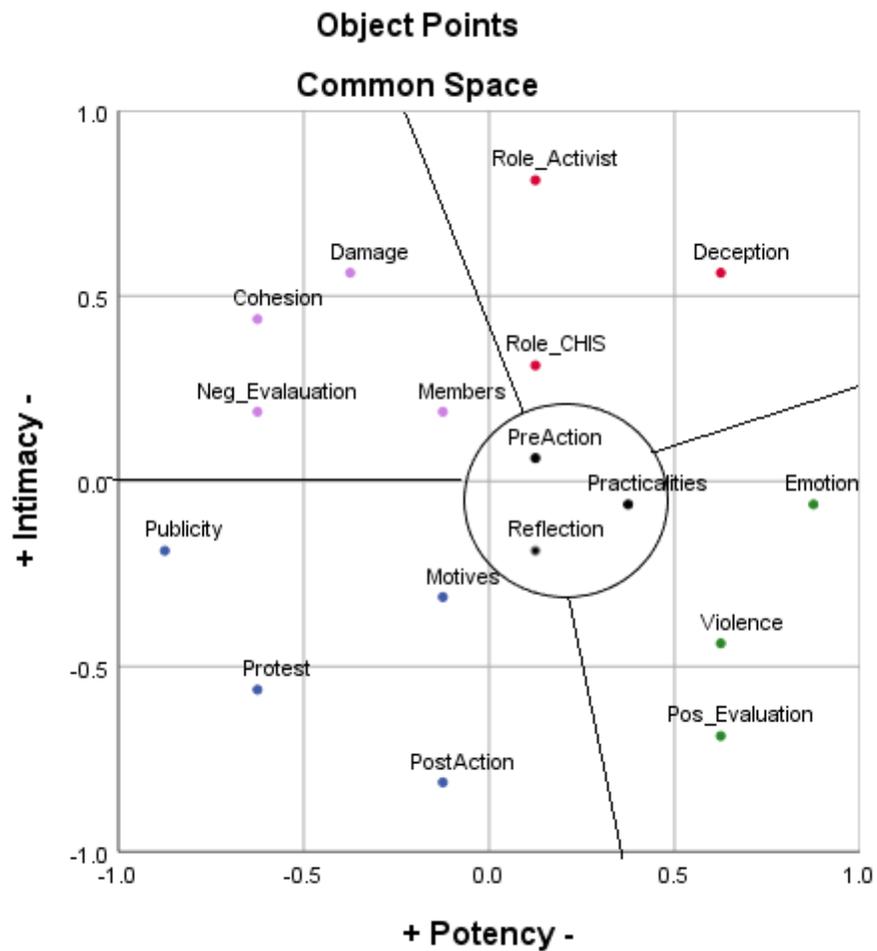
Narratives 6 and 7 (both truthful) differ from Narratives 2 and 5 in that, whilst these mock-informants also express low levels of potency, they additionally express low levels of intimacy. The mock-informant producing Narrative 6 only explicitly mentions themselves once during the entire narrative, with the rest of their account being dominated by the concept of “everybody” and “we”, indicating that they perceive themselves to be part of the group, rather than a forceful individual directing their own destiny. Consequently, this mock-informant can be seen to display low levels of potency. However, despite aligning themselves with the rest of the group, the mock-informant does not demonstrate any particular concern or affection towards any of the group members – they do not even state how many people are in the group, let alone any other details about them. This can therefore be interpreted as demonstrating low levels of intimacy. Youngs and Canter (2012) found that narratives expressing low potency and low intimacy were tragic tales. Narrative 6 could be read as a type of tragedy, in that despite all their discussion and debate the group still failed to reach any firm conclusions; this is perhaps best exemplified by the one sentence when the mock-informant does refer to themselves, when they state: “my impression was that we didn’t really reach a conclusion”. However, it is difficult to conclude that the narrator comes across as a tragic hero; rather, they come across as a tragic comrade, someone whose fate is bound to a group that they do not identify with but are somehow inextricably part of. As with Narratives 2 and 5, this narrative identity may indicate a mock-informant who is not particularly enamoured with their role, but, unlike Narratives 2 and 5, they are nonetheless co-operative and generally fatalistic. In the real world, this informant might be categorised as a ‘hammered’ (Miller, 2011) or an ‘indentured informant’ (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016).

Narrative 7 highlights a different dilemma, and could be interpreted as an account of the mock-informants own capability as a source of information. As such, the narrative is very low in intimacy; very little of the group is revealed, other than the name of the supposed leader. Instead, the mock-informant’s pre-occupation is with their own performance rather than the other group members. However, despite the strong focus on themselves, the mock-informant does not display high levels of potency; quite the opposite, this mock-informant appears to doubt their memory and fills in the gaps with vague speculation. Consequently, this mock-informant can be seen to possess the identity of a tragic hero; they want to fulfil their duty as a source of information, but they are repeatedly thwarted by their failing memory, resulting in constant speculation and self-doubt.

### *Smallest Space Analysis*

The themes and sub-themes identified through TA (see Table 8.1 and Figure 8.1) were subjected to multi-dimensional scaling analysis using SPSS software ensuring that proximities were shown as similarities. This accounted for 92.45% of the dispersion and returned a measure of Tucker's coefficient of congruence of .96. Lorenzo-Seva and ten Berge (2006) report that a Tucker's coefficient value between .85-.94 represents a fair degree of similarity, whilst anything above .95 represents a good degree of similarity. Thus, this measure was deemed acceptable. The distribution of thematic content can be seen in Figure 8.2.

Figure 8.2: Two-faceted common space map of thematic codes



Adopting a two-faceted regional hypothesis, the interaction of high to low potency and high to low intimacy ought to result in four distinct regions, representing the four narrative identities of hero's quest, professional's adventure, tragic hero, and victim's irony (Youngs & Canter, 2012). A visual analysis of the SSA reveals that the x-axis can be interpreted as levels of potency, moving from high (left) to low (right), whereas the y-axis can be interpreted as intimacy moving from high (top) to low (bottom). This interpretation reveals a core of content themes which co-occur most frequently across all mock-informant narratives, namely, *pre-action*, *practicalities* and *reflection*. The combination of high potency and low intimacy results in the narrative identity of a professional. According to the SSA, this narrative identity would result in a co-occurrence of content relating to *motives*, *publicity*, *protest*, and *post-action*. The hero's identity, of high potency and high intimacy, would be expressed through the co-occurrence of *members*, *cohesion*, *negative evaluation* and *damage*. The combination of low potency and low intimacy would be a tragic hero's account, and would contain content referring to *violence*, *emotion* and a *positive evaluation* of the group. Finally, the victim's low potency and high intimacy narrative would contain the co-occurrence of content about their *role in the action* and their *role as an informant* as well as referring to *group deception*.

## **Discussion**

Overall, the triangulation of analysis reveals some consistent findings, in particular, there appears to be a convergence of emotive content and the expression of low potency narratives among deceptive mock-informants.

Whilst mock-informant accounts contained the functional elements of a recognisable narrative and tended to adhere to a normal narrative structure, the majority of mock-informant accounts did not contain an evaluative section. According to the definition of a *normal* narrative provided by Labov and Waletzky (1997), an evaluative section is a necessary component without which there cannot be a resolution. However, the fact that most of the mock-informant narratives did not have a recognisable evaluative section is perhaps indicative of the forensic situation they are confronted with. The mock-informant is being asked to provide information about their associates that may be of investigative value. This may cause them to self-monitor their accounts and to consciously reduce the number of opinionated comments that they include, to ensure that their account is predominantly factual. It is noteworthy then, that when truthful and deceptive accounts are separated, the narratives provided by deceptive mock-informants do tend to have an evaluative section immediately prior to the resolution. This finding is supported by SSA, which found that emotive content co-occurred with deceptive content (i.e., *violence* and *group deception*).

It should be remembered though, that as part of narrative structure analysis, clauses were grouped together into sections, which were categorised according to the functionality of their majority. The fact that a clear evaluative section was not identifiable in the majority of cases does not mean that there were no evaluative comments – simply that they were too few to impact the categorisation of a section. Indeed, for a clause to be categorised as a resolution, it must have been preceded by an evaluative one (Labov & Waletzky, 1997), therefore, it may be more accurate to say that a normal mock-informant narrative contains insufficient evaluative comments to influence the categorisation of a section, rather than to leave the impression that they contain none at all. Consequently, the mere existence of evaluative content cannot be interpreted as an indication of deceit alone.

However, it was also found that deceptive mock-informants were more likely to use an abstract, and produced more orienting sections at the beginning of their account than truthful ones. Labov and Waletzky (1997) claim that orienting clauses increase credibility by referencing identifiable landmarks and other potential corroborating witnesses. Consequently, the tendency for deceptive mock-informants to produce a longer orienting section at the outset of their narrative may indicate an attempt to garner greater credibility before addressing the originating function of the narrative (in this instance, to provide information to their handler). There are other possible explanations though; by dedicating more of their account to abstract, orienting and evaluative remarks, deceptive mock-informants produce fewer narrative clauses as a proportion of their account. In other words, they are spending less time addressing the originating function (to provide information to their handler), potentially reflecting the different agendas between the handler and a deceptive informant.

Where an examination of emotive and evaluative content may also be beneficial, is in determining the mock-informant's narrative identity. Narrative identity analysis found that perceived levels of potency in particular tended to be expressed through evaluative comments (rather than the more factual orienting and complication clauses). The majority of deceptive mock-informants produced a narrative with a low-potency identity, and even those truthful mock-informants that expressed a low-potency narrative role also expressed conflicting loyalties or a deemed lack of capability. Again, this qualitative finding found support in the quantitative SSA, with deceptive content (i.e., *violence* and *group deception*) featuring in the low-potency region of the common space map.

What is perhaps missed by SSA, but becomes evident in the more nuanced qualitative analysis, is that mock-informant objectives were not solely influenced by the imposed dichotomy of truth and deceit. What became increasingly evident as analysis progressed is that mock-informant participants brought their own agendas, pre-conceptions, experiences and interpersonal relationships into the laboratory, and that these also impacted their narratives. For example, the mock-informant who produced Narrative 5 appears uncomfortable with their task to provide a truthful account of their associates' conspiracy. This is evidenced by the presence of a very short orienting remark as means of introducing

the narrative. Labov and Waletzky (1997) observe that a very short or absent orienting section indicates an intent to withhold information, and it can be concluded from the very brief account that this particular mock-informant was generally reluctant to assist, bordering on uncooperative. Narrative 2 provides another example of a truthful account where the mock-informant appears to feel a greater sense of loyalty to one of the group members than to the actual handler, and again appears to be lacking motivation for their role. Again, this is evidenced by a complete lack of an orienting section, and only a very few orienting remarks throughout an otherwise lengthy account. The lack of orienting comments again appears to indicate an intention to withhold pertinent information.

Whilst Narratives 2 and 5 could be assessed as uncooperative accounts (given their overall brevity), that is perhaps less accurate for Narratives 6 and 7. Whilst producing a truthful and generally co-operative account, the mock-informant for Narrative 6 appeared rather fatalistic regarding their role, and expressed a general lack of motivation to perform as a source of information. Narrative 7 is slightly different, rather than low levels of potency revealing a lack of co-operative intent or a lack of motivation to perform as a mock-informant, the low levels of potency expressed by this source indicate low levels of perceived competency. Therefore, to distinguish between a lack of co-operation and a lack of motivation or competency, it is worth considering the combination of both potency and intimacy. Both mock-informants in Narrative 2 and Narrative 5 expressed high levels of intimacy, indicating an affiliation towards the group and producing a narrative identity of a victim. The mock-informants producing Narratives 6 and 7 however, both expressed low levels of intimacy; they did not care for the other group members, they just did not want to be a source of information. Their narrative identities were of tragic heroes. Therefore, a more nuanced understanding of narrative identity reveals personal agendas beyond that imposed by the experimental design.

### ***Strengths and Limitations of the Study***

It could be argued that the findings of this research are non-falsifiable. In particular, transcripts were coded for the presence of potency and intimacy, as well as the pre-determined Labovian categories of a normal narrative structure. However, both forms of analysis have been established through previous research in similar contexts, such as offender profiling (Youngs & Canter, 2012) or accounts of a criminal event (Guan & Zhang, 2018), as such there is a strong theoretical underpinning to support their application to the analysis of informant narratives. Additionally, SSA was employed to provide further validity to findings, especially in terms of narrative identity, and the resultant common space map clearly demonstrates that the two facets of potency and intimacy are observable in mock-informant accounts. Furthermore, that this research found evidence of narrative identity and structure in the current sample

does not imply that any other form of analysis would be any more or less valid, simply that an analysis of narrative identity and structure may prove fruitful when examining informant accounts.

This study utilised a relatively small sample obtained in a laboratory environment. The complex psychological dilemma involved in producing a mock-informant account resulted in a number of truthful accounts being produced which could have been categorised as deceptive. Certainly, an affiliation towards the group resulting in an uncooperative mock-informant narrative, such as Narratives 2 and 5, may well result in a real-life informant being categorised as malicious or deceitful by practitioners who need to consider their own personal safety and the reputational risk to themselves and their organisation (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Yousef & Brackin, 2010). Consequently, whilst such anomalies serve to skew the results and weaken the conclusions of any subsequent analysis, they highlight the potential benefits of narrative analysis in an applied setting, where the definitive division of truthful versus deceptive informant may indeed be more blurred. Therefore, it is a further strength of this research that a unique informant specific paradigm was employed, with participants being active not only in the dissemination of information (i.e., interview phase) but also in the collection of information (i.e., conspiracy phase).

This is the first study to examine the potential benefits of a narrative analysis approach to understanding the varying objectives of informants. What this study demonstrates is that the situational dilemma faced by a tasked informant is a complex one, and the traditional concept of deception as being a dichotomous relationship between truth and lie may be too simplistic. Results from the practitioner survey conducted as part of this thesis (Chapter Seven) indicate that practitioners are as concerned with the dangers presented by an uncooperative informant as they are with a fabricating one, and what this study demonstrates is that narrative analysis may be able to provide insights into levels of co-operation and motivation, as well as deception.

### ***Implications for Practice and Research***

A particular strength of this research is that it provides practitioners with a non-interventionary technique for detecting possible deception. Unlike the cognitive approach, the interviewer did not need to impose cognitive load on the informant, nor did they need to re-direct their own resources towards observable cues of deception (Vrij et al., 2017). Given the unique relationship between handler and informant, and the requirement to establish and maintain rapport (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Nunan et al., 2020a; Hess & Amir, 2002), it is foreseeable that this is especially beneficial within a handler-informant interaction. Additionally, findings tenuously suggests a link between deception, narrative role and verbal content. DePaulo et al. (2003) argue that all deception involves a misrepresentation of self, however, individuals are generally assumed to be motivated to present a positive image of themselves

(DePaulo, et al., 2003; Hargie & Dickson, 2004). This assumption is not supported by the current study, with deceptive content occurring in low potency regions of the common space map, indicating that situational factors dictate how deception is practiced (Burgoon & Buller, 1994). Consequently, the combined analysis of a narrative account has potential benefits for practitioners seeking to determine not only veracity, but also varying levels of co-operation and motivation.

Mock-informants produced a recognisable narrative account (Labov & Waletzky, 1997), and this finding adds tentative support to the hypothesis that an informant will naturally choose to use the evolved behaviour of gossip to communicate information about an absent third party. Therefore, handlers should seek to maximise this tendency, so that they can fully exploit the potential benefits of narrative analysis in the future. Additionally, future research should be directed towards encouraging informants to produce a naturalistic gossip narrative to further explore the findings of the current study.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrates that the purposeful elicitation and analysis of a gossip narrative could provide practitioners with an opportunity to assess motivation, co-operation, and deception. Additionally, the use of gossip is also likely to encourage increased rapport (Dunbar, 2004) and greater recall for social information (McAndrew & Milenkovic, 2002; McGregor & Holmes, 1999). Importantly, obtaining an initial account from an informant in the form of a gossip narrative, does not preclude practitioners from then deploying other psychological tools, such as the Cognitive Interview (Bull, et al., 2009; Leins et al., 2014) or Timeline Technique (Hope et al., 2019; Hope et al., 2013), to further enhance their intelligence objectives if necessary.

Given the natural tendency of informants to gossip, the potential benefits of allowing an informant to engage in gossip, and the opportunities presented by narrative analysis, a bespoke informant interview model ought to explore ways for handlers to encourage a gossip narrative. The next chapter will outline such a model.

## Chapter 9<sup>5</sup>

### A Bespoke Informant Interview Model

#### Chapter Summary

The current chapter will bring together all the research previously conducted as part of this thesis to develop a bespoke informant interview model. This interview model will adopt a holistic perspective to an informant interaction. Firstly, it will seek to address a range of handler objectives, identified from the literature review (Chapters Four and Five) and confirmed by the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven). However, it will also be responsive to the unique situational dilemma of an informant, as an active participant in both the collection and dissemination of interpersonal information (as identified in Chapter Three and explored experimentally in Chapter Eight). The resultant RWITS-US model (**R**eview and **R**esearch; **W**elfare; **I**nformation; **T**asking; **S**ecurity; **U**nderstanding Context; **S**haring), which can be remembered by the axiom *keeping our wits about us*, will be introduced as an alternative to the existing PEACE model of interviewing (see Chapter Two). Cognisant of the current lack of informant specific research, in particular the absence of any published articles to date that incorporate informant tasking and the active collection of interpersonal information (as identified through the Study Space Analysis in Chapter Six), a novel research paradigm was developed to test the new RWITS-US model against the PEACE model in an ecologically valid laboratory experiment. Results indicate that the RWITS-US model was significantly better at establishing rapport than the PEACE model, without having any detrimental impact on informant motivation, co-operation or intelligence yield. These results provide confidence for the future development of the RWITS-US model through further laboratory testing and field research.

#### Introduction

The practitioner survey (Chapter Seven) demonstrated the complex and competing requirements of informant handlers. However, what is evident from the literature is that there are unique power dynamics between handler and informant (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Schirman, 2014; Yousef & Brackin, 2010), and the handler has to be able to balance their own objectives against those of the informant (Henry et al., 2019). What remains clear is that informants are, first and foremost, a source of

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<sup>5</sup> Elements of this chapter were included in the below publication. The present author was the sole author of all material included in this chapter from this publication: Moffett, L., Oxburgh, G. E., Watson, S.J, Dresser, P., & Gabbert, F. (in prep.). Keeping our wits about us: Introducing a bespoke informant interview model for Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) interactions.

information, and how the handlers access this information is likely to impact their overall success (Billingsley, 2009; Nunan, et al., 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, & May, 2020). Currently, the only interview model recommended by the CoP for gathering information is the PEACE model (CoP, 2020). However, whilst the PEACE model places an emphasis on gathering information through the use of rapport and non-coercive techniques, it has never been tested against the unique situational dilemma of a tasked informant.

Whilst the PEACE model focusses on both rapport and gathering information, it is increasingly acknowledged within the academic community that what constitutes appropriate rapport is dictated by situational context (Gabbert et al., 2021). The rapport built during the *engage and explain* phase of the PEACE model is envisaged as being relatively functional and focussed on the interview process itself, outlining objectives, roles and expectations (CoP, 2020). Indeed, this form of *functional rapport* is often merely conceived as a means of improving intelligence yield within the confines of the investigative interview (Alison et al., 2013; Evans et al., 2010). This is not comparable to the long-term *relational rapport* required between a handler and their informant (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Henry et al., 2019); this kind of rapport needs to be transposable across multiple meetings for the duration of the informant-handler relationship (Birkett & Pike, 2017) and is often expressed by handlers as a genuine concern for the informant's wellbeing and welfare (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Moffett et al., 2021; Nunan et al., 2020a; Stanier & Nunan, 2021). Consequently, the functional rapport established during a PEACE interview may not be sufficient or even suitable for a continuous informant-handler relationship.

A further requirement incumbent on informant handlers that is not shared by other investigative interviewers, is the need to establish informant co-operation (Moffett et al., 2021). Within the context of an investigative interview, co-operation is often inferred from the disclosure of information (Alison et al., 2014), however, informants must be tasked to voluntarily obtain information from or about their associates, not to merely disclose it (Home Office, 2018). Consequently, informant co-operation must be defined in terms of their willingness not only to disclose information, but also to undertake tasking and to continue to engage with their handler over the course of an operational deployment. Indeed, even the type of information sought from an informant is contextually different from an investigative interview; informants are expected to exploit new and existing social relationships to obtain information about the actions or intentions of their associates (Home Office, 2018; Moffett et al., 2021). This is likely to be stored within social memory (Blank, 2009; Brown et al., 2012), and may require different retrieval strategies focussing on narrative and identity (Blank, 2009; Massa & Simeoni, 2014; McGregor & Holmes, 1999); something which is not explicitly addressed within the *account* phase of the PEACE model.

Therefore, the aim of the current study was to design and test a bespoke informant interview model that adopted a holistic concept of success, namely, one which could address multiple handler

requirements whilst simultaneously being responsive to the informant's own objectives and their active role in collecting and disseminating social information.

### **Introducing RWITS-US**

By developing an understanding of the unique situational dilemma facing an informant, and by adopting a holistic perspective of an interaction between handler and informant, it is possible to conceive of an alternative interview model that may be better suited to informant interviews than the existing PEACE model. The mnemonic RWITS-US (which can be remembered by the axiom: *keeping our wits about us*) relates to the various stages of such an alternative: **Review and research**, **Welfare**, **Information**, **Tasking** and **Security** – followed by two post-interview phases of *Understanding context* and *Sharing information*. The RWITS-US model takes account of all aspects contained in the recently published Mendez Principles (APT, 2021). Each stage is explained below:

**Review and Research:** This would replace the *planning and preparation* phase of the PEACE model, and would instead focus on *reviewing* previous contacts with the informant as well as their access to information, which was identified as a key consideration of handlers during the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven). Additionally, *research* should be conducted on the informant themselves. Informant motivation is often linked to their current circumstances (Billingsley, 2001); therefore, an understanding of an informant's circumstances will result in a greater understanding of their potential motivation. As identified within the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven), there is a perceived interconnectivity between informant motivation and deception, and it is foreseeable that an appreciation of current circumstance, along with previous behaviour and existing relationships, will better prepare the handler to detect any potential deceit (Vrij, 2008; Schirman, 2014). Detecting deception was also a primary concern of informant handlers (Chapter Seven).

**Welfare:** The word *welfare* featured in the practitioner survey conducted as part of this thesis (Chapter Seven), and has also been referenced in several other survey's of UK-based informant handlers (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Nunan et al., 2020a; Stanier & Nunan, 2021). Handlers are required to establish long-term relational rapport with their informant if they are to achieve their intelligence objectives (Henry et al., 2019), and the prevalence of the word *welfare* across practitioner surveys is perhaps indicative of this. Interpersonal relationships are developed by engendering a sense of autonomy (Alison et al., 2013), expressing empathy (Gabbert et al., 2021) and demonstrating a willingness to address concerns and expectations (Hargie & Dickson, 2004). Handlers should therefore begin an informant interview with a welfare enquiry. This will provide handlers with an opportunity to employ a number of interpersonal skills, including active listening (Hargie & Dickson, 2004) and, where appropriate, personal self-disclosures (Hargie & Dickson, 2004), thereby increasing relational rapport. At a more

practical level, a welfare enquiry at the outset of the engagement will ensure that there are no apparent obstacles to progressing the de-brief.

It is perhaps worth considering that an initial welfare enquiry may prompt an informant to raise topics relating to another sub-heading (i.e., information or security). The focus of the *welfare* phase should be informant autonomy, therefore, the handler should be prepared to explore these topics (if raised by the informant) before returning to their own sequence of questions. In essence, given the unique relational dynamics between handler and informant, a handler will only be able to address their own agenda if they have first attended to their informant's agenda (Henry et al., 2019).

**Information:** Social information (i.e., information about associates and social relations) is often stored and recalled as a narrative (Blank, 2009; Brown et al., 2012; Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2012). Narration provides a familiar framework to assist recall and (importantly for an informant) providing a structured narrative account improves memory for interpersonal interaction and relationships (Massa & Simeoni, 2014; McAndrew & Milenkovic, 2002; McGregor & Holmes, 1999). Labov and Waletzky (1997) identified a structured narrative as one made up of six functional elements (abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, coda), and narrative analysis (Chapter Eight) demonstrated that informants do indeed produce a recognisable narrative conforming to this structure. Whatsmore, an informant narrative adheres to the definition of gossip, as an "... exchange of information about absent third parties" (Foster, 2004, p. 81). Previous research has found that individuals are more likely to gossip if the subject of the gossip is of high interest, their behaviour is anti-social and there is a pro-social motive for gossip (Feinberg, et al., 2012; Wert & Salovey, 2004). Consequently, handlers should encourage informants to produce a gossip narrative by emphasising these features in relation to any particular person of interest (PoI), and by sequentially exploring the six functional elements of a normal narrative (Labov & Waletzky, 1997).

**Tasking:** Tasking an informant will provide them with clear steps that they need to take prior to the next meeting. At the conclusion of the tasking process the informant must be prepared to undertake their task, attend to and encode target information, and subsequently re-engage with their handler. To facilitate this, the handler should provide the informant with a meaningful context for their tasking objectives (Anderson, 2009). Given the importance of narrative and narrative identity to the formation of social memory (Blank, 2009), and to informant recall (Chapter Eight), this elaborated tasking may benefit from being presented in the structure of a normal narrative, as outlined by Labov and Waletzky (1997).

**Security:** Unlike most witnesses or victims of crime, informants are covert, and handlers completing the survey in this thesis (Chapter Seven) re-affirmed that they are responsible for ensuring the safety and security of their informants (Henry et al, 2019; Home Office, 2018; Moffett et al., 2021). It is foreseeable that the implementation of suitable security protocols would increase overall informant

co-operation (Yousef & Brackin, 2010), therefore, security measures should be explained to the informant before they leave the meeting. One documented technique available to handlers is to provide informants with a cover story for their activities (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Nunan, et al., 2020a; 2020b; Stanier & Nunan, 2021).

**Understanding Context:** Information cannot be considered intelligence until it has undergone a form of evaluation (ACPO, 2007; CoP, 2019). This evaluative process should consider how the information was obtained (known as *provenance*; CoP, 2019), how accurate the information appears to be, and how reliable the information is (Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 2005). This requires an understanding of context, in relation to the informants activity when gathering information, existing intelligence, and informant relationships. Whilst handlers are likely to explore provenance (or how the informant gathered information) during the *information* phase, with the elicitation of a gossip narrative, it may be possible to seek verification of their account through post-interview intelligence checks (Nahari et al., 2014). Additionally, information can be examined in the context of the wider intelligence picture, to identify points of corroboration and / or contradiction to establish accuracy. Finally, the context of informant relationships, to both the PoI and their handler, ought to be assessed post-interview. For example, it is possible that the informant is being completely truthful and accurate in their reporting, but that the relationship with the PoI is such that the informant has themselves been deceived or misled. Alternatively, the handler may have failed to establish a co-operative relationship with the informant, and the informant may purposely be deceiving their handler (as empirically tested in Chapter Eight of this thesis).

**Sharing:** Investigative interviews conducted using PEACE are evidential interviews, however, that is not necessarily the case with informant interviews (Home Office, 2018). Information gleaned from an informant must be actionable intelligence capable of informing the decision-making process (ACPO, 2007; CoP, 2019). Consequently, ensuring that relevant agencies and departments are identified, and that actionable intelligence is shared with them, is a vital part of the de-brief process (Drogin, 2007; Intelligence Science Board, 2006; Pearse, 2009; Privacy International, 2018).

## **Current Study**

Having identified a viable alternative to the existing PEACE model of interview, it was necessary to experimentally test this bespoke informant interview model (RWITS-US) against the PEACE model in a mock-informant role play paradigm. Given the exploratory nature of this research, no hypotheses were proposed, however, both models were tested against outcomes that were shown to be important to informant handlers during the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven). These were: motivation, rapport, co-operation, and information. The study was designed to ascertain whether the

RWITS-US interview model could perform as well as, or even better than, the existing PEACE model on these measures within a realistic informant paradigm.

## **Method**

### *Design*

A single factor (interview), within-subjects design consisting of two levels of the Independent Variable (PEACE versus RWITS-US) was utilised. Paired sample *t*-tests were used to determine differences between the interview approaches. The Dependent Variables (DV) were: (i) motivation; (ii) rapport; (iii) cooperativeness; (iv) information gain. The two levels were counter-balanced between mock-informant participants with approximately half of the participants ( $n=10$ ) being allocated to the PEACE interview first, whilst the remainder ( $n=9$ ) were allocated to the RWITS-US interview first.

### *Participants*

There were two groups of participants in this study. Participation was voluntary and no incentives were offered. The two groups were:

#### **Group 1: Mock-informants (N = 19).**

An online snowball sampling method was used for the recruitment of participants to this group. Specifically, a link was sent via email to various contacts who were known to have a research or professional interest in gathering information from informants. These contacts forwarded the link to students and colleagues who they believed may have an interest in taking part. Participants were also able to forward the link on to any other associates. Nineteen participants (male  $n = 11$ ; female  $n = 8$ ) ranging in age from 19 – 51 years ( $M = 25.79$ ,  $SD = 7.69$ ) participated as mock-informants.

#### **Group 2: Mock-handlers (N = 3).**

This group were selectively invited to take part. Participants for this role were purposively sampled based on their experience conducting intelligence interviews. Thus, the inclusion criteria were that they all had to be current or former employees of a government agency (e.g., military or law enforcement) and had previous experience with HUMINT. It was not possible to utilise the same individual in the role of mock-handler throughout the course of the experiment, therefore these inclusion

criteria were adopted to minimise the impact of individual differences between mock-handlers. The author participated in the role of mock Person of Interest (PoI) for each experimental scenario.

### ***Materials***

A fictional case-study was produced to provide the basis for the role-play scenario (Appendix L). The scenario revolved around the activities of a fictional PoI who was the presumed leader of a radical separatist movement, code-named the 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade. The notional aim of the 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade was for their local town (the fictional town of Stockfield) to secede from the rest of the UK and they were prepared to commit criminal acts to highlight their political cause.

Two separate non-public websites were built to facilitate the experiment, which was conducted completely online to accommodate restrictions imposed as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic (HMG, 2020). The first was a booking site that provided participants with information regarding the experiment and an opportunity to book a time for the research. The second website consisted of thirteen tabs or pages containing all the information and links required to participate in the study. Embedded links to an online video conferencing platform (Zoom) were used for meetings between the mock-informant and the mock-PoI, and the mock-informant and the mock-handler. Zoom was selected for its widespread and ease of use and because it has previously been used successfully in other online experiments (see Archibald et al., 2019).

Background information, including target information, was prepared for the mock-PoI (Appendix N). This was not a prescriptive script, and the mock-PoI responded naturally and dynamically to the mock-informant (based on previous field experience), to maintain ecological validity and a sense of realism for mock-informants (as *active* collectors of information). However, the mock-PoI ensured that all the target pieces of information were revealed at the correct stage of the scenario.

Mock-handlers were provided with two interview scripts: (i) PEACE, and; (ii) RWITS-US (Appendix O). It was acknowledged that interviews are necessarily dynamic and occasionally reactive (CoP, 2020; Pearse, 2009), thus, interviewers were permitted to react to mock-informants in a naturally conversational manner and to answer any questions they might pose, whilst maintaining their role as a mock-handler, should this become necessary. However, interview questions and the overall structure and sequence that they were presented were scripted for consistency and in adherence to the two interview models.

The dependent variables of motivation, rapport and co-operation were measured using a questionnaire embedded within the experimental website. Each question could be answered on a 7-point Likert scale (with 1 being 'not at all' and 7 being 'completely'). Scores for rapport and co-operation were obtained by working out the average score from three questions designed to address each variable;

motivation was scored from a single question (intelligence gain was scored by the amount of target information actually reported). The questions used in the questionnaire can be found in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: Questions used to measure the dependent variables of motivation, rapport and co-operation.

Variable	Question
Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please rate how motivated you were to perform in your role as a CHIS.</li> </ul>
Rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please rate how likeable the handler was.</li> <li>• Please rate how much you felt you had in common with the handler.</li> <li>• Please rate how easy you felt it was for you to talk to the handler.</li> </ul>
Co-operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Please rate how likely you would be to meet with the handler again.</li> <li>• Please rate how likely you would be to complete further tasks for the handler.</li> <li>• Please rate how much of the information you obtained you disclosed to the handler.</li> </ul>

## *Procedure*

Prior to data collection, full ethical approval was received from Northumbria University (Ref: 3986/2020). Initially, a pilot study was conducted to familiarise mock-handlers with the different interview techniques and the online procedure. Mock-handlers were provided with a PowerPoint briefing on the two interview models and were afforded the opportunity to ask questions prior to the pilot study taking place. Two participants from the Officer Training Corps (OTC) (a voluntary UK military organisation for university students) performed the role of mock-informant and completed the full procedure twice - this allowed four mock-handler participants to practice the entire procedure, including both interview techniques. Of the four mock-handlers who completed the pilot study, three progressed to the live data collection phase. The pilot study also allowed the website and online tools to be tested prior to live data collection.

Both the pilot and main studies were conducted online during the COVID-19 pandemic and were designed to adhere with legislative requirements (HMG, 2020). From the booking site mock-informant participants were provided background information regarding the study (a role-play scenario where they would be required to adopt the role of a mock-informant; that they would meet a mock-PoI and mock-handler on two separate occasions; and that the procedure would last approximately 45 – 60 minutes in total) and were able to select an available time-slot. On completion of this process, participants received an automated email (managed by an online application) containing the link for the online experiment.

At their elected time, participants clicked on the link for the online experiment and landed on the Home page, this repeated the information provided on the booking page as well as listing email contact information for the experimenter. Having registered their consent, participants were informed that, to complete the experiment, they needed to work through the procedure as outlined in Table 9.2.

Table 9.2: Online experimental procedure

Written Briefing (1)	<p>You are a registered CHIS who has previously reported on political extremist activity.</p> <p>A PoI is holding a virtual rally, you are tasked to attend the rally to find out more about their political activities, ideology, past actions and future intentions.</p> <p>You will need to contact your handler as soon as you finish the meeting.</p>
PoI Meeting (1)	<p>PoI reveals 7 items of target information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name – RED;</li> <li>• Email address – SAMARA1918@redmail.com</li> <li>• Group name – The 25th Brigade;</li> <li>• Group aim – to secede from the national government;</li> <li>• Local activities – raise awareness and attract new members;</li> <li>• Past criminality – graffiti of government buildings;</li> <li>• Future criminality – if no-one will listen PoI is prepared to engage in more serious offences.</li> </ul>
Handler De-brief (1)	<p>PEACE / RWITS Interview (see appendix) Counter balanced between participants.</p>
Questionnaire	<p>See Table 9.1.</p>
Written Briefing (2)	<p>PoI has invited you to join a further online meeting.</p> <p>You are tasked to attend the meeting and find out more about their political activities and future intentions.</p> <p>You will need to contact your handler as soon as you finish the meeting.</p>
PoI Meet (2)	<p>PoI reveals 7 items of target information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PoI wants you to rent a van;</li> <li>• PoI has kidnapped someone;</li> <li>• Victim - A local councillor called Xander Wright;</li> <li>• Meeting place - car park of a disused pub;</li> <li>• Address – THE CHIMNEY SWEEP SB11 4LY</li> </ul>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan - to make a video with councillor demanding secession;</li> <li>• Aim - to inspire people to join the cause.</li> </ul>
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Handler De-brief (2)	PEACE / RWITS interview (see appendix). Alternated within subjects.
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Questionnaire	See Table 9.1.
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Each interview was live monitored and the number of items of target information (a maximum of 7 for each interview) that the mock-informant revealed were live scored. Mock-handlers were also aware of the target information and scored this concurrently. At the conclusion of each procedure mock-handlers were verbally de-briefed. Any discrepancies in scoring were discussed and agreement reached as to whether the participant gave sufficient and sufficiently clear information to justify a positive score. Informant interviews were recorded so that these could be referred to in the event of disagreement; ultimately, this did not prove necessary, as discussions did not centre around *what* was said by mock-informants, but whether it was sufficient to justify a score. Because mock-informant participants were briefed to adopt the role of an established and co-operative CHIS, errors and confabulations were not coded or scored and did not feature in any further analysis. Additionally, the verbal de-brief provided mock-handlers with an opportunity to state any observations that they believed influenced the outcome of the informant interview. Observational field notes were compiled as part of these discussions.

## Results

### *Statistical Analysis*

Mean scores and standard deviations were obtained for the DVs of (i) motivation; (ii) rapport; (iii) co-operation, and; (iv) information. Paired *t*-tests were conducted for each DV. Results revealed there was a statistically significant difference between conditions for rapport ( $p = .035$ ), with mock-informants reporting greater levels of rapport in the RWITS-US condition ( $M = 5.56$ ;  $SD = 1.01$ ) compared to PEACE ( $M = 4.98$ ;  $SD = 1.44$ ). There was no statistically significant difference between conditions for motivation, co-operation and information. Full results, including mean scores and standard deviations (from 7-point Likert scales), can be found in Table 9.3.

Table 9.3: Results of paired t-tests on dependent variables.

	PEACE M (SD)	RWITS-US M (SD)	t (df)	p	d	95% CI
Motivation	5.79 (1.27)	5.63 (.90)	.615 (18)	.546	0.15	.381 - .697
Rapport	4.98 (1.44)	5.56 (1.01)	2.274 (18)	.035	0.47	1.11 - .044
Cooperation	6.02 (1.00)	6.18 (.95)	.856 (18)	.403	0.16	.545 - .23
Information	5.95 (1.51)	6.00 (1.25)	.152 (18)	.881	0.15	.78 - .674

### ***Observational Field Notes***

Given the unique and exploratory nature of the procedure employed, observational field notes were made throughout. It was envisaged that these notes could be used to inform future attempts at paradigm replication. Observations were categorised into the themes outlined below:

#### **Connectivity.**

The paradigm relied upon sound and consistent internet connectivity. Whilst no participants were excluded due to poor or absent connectivity, there were occasions when participants were asked to turn their camera off to maintain the audio link. This was done by the experimenter in the role of the mock-PoI, and it would be a completely natural measure to take within the scenario, however, it is difficult to assess retrospectively (as it was not measured) how connectivity issues may have impacted upon the dependent variables, in particular rapport.

#### **Note Making.**

It was observed by the experimenter and by mock-handlers that a number of the mock-informants had made and were referring to notes. This was not anticipated and, given the online scenario, could not be controlled for. Consideration was given to introducing a new instruction not to make notes, but it was assessed that this would introduce a new variable that would have a direct impact on subsequent analysis. Ultimately, it was decided that the current paradigm was not designed to impose a mnemonic load on participants, nor was it designed to specifically measure the efficacy of memory enhancing techniques, therefore, note taking was left to the discretion of participants in their role as mock-informants engaging online with a mock-PoI and mock-handler. Overall, this only strengthened

the observation that a lack of target information was not the result of a lack of recall ability, but a lack of attending to and encoding the information.

### **Individual Cognitions.**

It was noteworthy that a number of mock-informants expressed their individual cognitions to mock-handlers, explaining how they elicited information from the mock-PoI or why they adopted certain tactics. Understanding the variety of elicitation tactics available to tasked informants and which, if any, maximise intelligence yield, could be a potential avenue of future research. Of particular interest to practitioners may be whether the expression of particular cognitions is indicative of integrity or deceit, and this could be explored in similar paradigms by introducing deception as a further variable.

### **Personal Interest / Sympathy Bias.**

Although the role-play scenario culminated in a violent criminal act (kidnap), the mock-PoI presented themselves as someone motivated by a particular political ideology. As the experiment progressed it was clear from the way mock-informant participants engaged with the mock-PoI that some of them had a deeper understanding and awareness of various political ideologies, including the one espoused by the mock-PoI. Particularly noteworthy was participant #18, who engaged enthusiastically with the mock-PoI, and expressed sympathy with their political views. This may have been an elicitation tactic within the role of a mock-informant, however, this participant only reported 4 (of 7) pieces of target information following the first engagement with the mock-PoI, and misrepresented the fictional 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade as being relatively low-key (despite being informed that they planned to escalate their criminal activity in the future). It is not clear which psychological processes were at play during the initial interview, but an unconscious sympathy bias may have caused the mock-informant to downplay the seriousness of the threat posed by the mock-PoI. The real-world implications of a sympathy bias on intelligence reporting would justify further exploration of this subject.

## **Discussion**

The PEACE model is a rapport-based information-gathering interview model that was developed in collaboration between academics, police officers and legal professionals (Bull et al., 2009; Clarke & Milne, 2001; CPTU, 1992a,b; Walsh & Bull, 2010). The PEACE model has evolved over nearly 30-years of academic research and practitioner usage. PEACE is now widely employed by law enforcement and other governmental investigative agencies around the world (CoP, 2020; Oxburgh et al, 2011; Walsh

& Milne, 2008; Walsh & Bull, 2012), and has been recommended for use with informants (Evans et al., 2013; Nunan et al., 2020a; 2020c). As such, it is a stern and relevant comparator for any new model to be tested against. However, in a unique experimental paradigm designed to simulate the situational and operational dilemma of an informant (as an active participant in the collection and dissemination of information), the PEACE model did not perform significantly better than the new RWITS-US model. Indeed, in terms of self-reported rapport, the new RWITS-US model was rated significantly higher than the PEACE model.

The RWITS-US interview model was designed to address the unique situational dilemma of an informant, and was developed by adopting a holistic perspective of an informant interaction, considering not only a range of handler objectives (see Chapters Four, Five and Seven), but also the relational dynamics between handler and informant (see Chapters Three and Eight). Specifically, the RWITS-US model placed an emphasis on relational (as opposed to functional) rapport, encapsulated by a concern for the informant's welfare, and on the elicitation of social information through the use of narrative prompts and probes. Whilst it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusions from this initial study, there are indications that the RWITS-US model does not have a detrimental impact on the dependent variables measured, and there may in fact be benefits to its use. Although these benefits may only be slight, within the context of applied research, slight benefits may well be sufficient (Ziliak, 2019).

However, despite the RWITS-US model performing slightly better in some areas than the PEACE model, there are several limitations, and thus, caution should be exercised when interpreting the results.

### *Strengths and Limitations of the Study*

This is the first study to conceive of a bespoke informant interview model that addresses a range of handler objectives (identified through research; Chapter Seven). An additional strength of this study is that, despite previous researchers recommending use of the PEACE interview with informants (i.e., Nunan et al., 2020a; 2020b), this is the first to test the efficacy of PEACE in a mock-informant paradigm. Crucial to the development of this paradigm was the inclusion of three clear phases as part of an informant deployment: (i) receipt of tasking instructions; (ii) interpersonal engagement with PoI; (iii) handler de-brief. To date, there are no published research articles that have simulated this process (see Chapter Six).

It could be argued that conducting informant interviews online, using videoconferencing software, is a limitation of the study, and does not accurately replicate face-to-face engagements. However, internet based communications are used to de-brief informants (Birkett & Pike, 2017) and whilst they may not be the dominant form of communication at present, internet based communications

with informants have been recommended for greater use in the future (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Stanier & Nunan, 2021). Consequently, results from this study may provide some reassurance to practitioners looking to shift their communications toward emerging technologies.

The sample size ( $N = 19$ ) could be seen as a limitation to the current study, and it could be argued that the sample lacked sufficient power to detect significant differences, with G\*Power recommending a sample of 45 participants (Faul et al., 2007). However, this was exploratory research testing the efficacy of a new informant interview model (RWITS-US) through the use of a novel experimental role-play paradigm during the Covid-19 pandemic. In particular, the current research was designed to inform practitioner application, and when conducting research of this nature it is often preferable to conduct t-tests on a smaller sample whilst prioritising ecological validity and replicability (Ziliak, 2019). Consequently, the current research can be considered a proof-of-concept study. Ultimately, caution should be employed when drawing conclusions from a single study of this nature (Ziliak, 2019), however, results from the current study ought to provide researchers with sufficient confidence to attempt replication, and may additionally encourage practitioners to engage in the development of the RWITS-US informant interview model.

### ***Implications for Practice and Research***

This is the first study to propose and test a new interview model to rival PEACE for interviewing informants, consequently, before any conclusions can be drawn regarding its supposed efficacy, further research needs to be conducted to reproduce and replicate findings from the current study. Preliminary evidence suggests that a bespoke informant interview model (RWITS-US) results in greater rapport without any reduction in motivation, co-operation, or information provision when compared to PEACE, and further research should seek to replicate results across various modes of communication, especially those that are more commonly employed, such as telephone and face-to-face encounters (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Stanier & Nunan, 2021).

It is not currently known whether or how a face-to-face encounter would impact the dependent variables measured in the current study when compared to an online de-brief. However, source handlers have previously noted the importance of the meeting environment on building rapport (Birkett & Pike, 2017), and informant meetings would appear to be more informal encounters than the typical investigative interview (Nunan, et al., 2020a; Storm, et al., 2015). It can therefore be envisaged that a face-to-face encounter would provide the handler with more opportunities to engage in rapport building techniques, such as offering food or drink. Additionally, the RWITS-US model is designed for use on established and largely co-operative informants, and is based on the concept of generating a gossip narrative. Gossip often relates to a mutual associate (Feinberg et al., 2012), and whilst the PoI may not

be an associate of both the handler and informant, the handler may be able to affect familiarity with the PoI based upon previous discussions or research; however, in the current study, this level of familiarity was not manipulated. Furthermore, gossip has also been shown to increase rapport (Dunbar, 2004). It is possible then, that a paradigm involving a face-to-face de-brief and with affected familiarity with the PoI would have resulted in even greater differences in self-reported rapport in favour of the RWITS-US model.

It should also be recognised that the PEACE model has evolved over a number of decades through a continual process of empirical research and field testing. It is foreseeable that the proposed RWITS-US model would also benefit from further research to explore the contribution of the individual components of the model. For example, in the current study a neutral narrative prompt was used, however, Youngs and Canter (2009) speculate that an understanding of an individual's dominant narrative identity could be used to improve interview outcomes. Given the emphasis of the RWITS-US model on narrative, it can be foreseen that the incorporation of such knowledge into a narrative prompt and elaborated tasking instructions could benefit intelligence yield, co-operation and possibly even rapport.

The current model might also benefit from research into other areas affecting informant performance more broadly. For example, whilst the average amount of target information correctly recalled was high in both conditions, there were a number of individual mock-informant participants who failed to recall the majority of the target details presented to them, despite the fact that there was no delay between encoding and recall. This suggests that there may be benefit in understanding what information tasked informants attend to and why; understanding this may not only inform elicitation attempts, but may also influence the tasking process. It is also worth remembering that the RWITS-US model was designed for use on established co-operative informants, as this appears to be the dominant situation in practice (Kleinman, 2006b; Nunan, et al., 2020a; 2020b), however, the process involved in recruiting informants and establishing that co-operative relationship is under researched (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016), and a greater understanding of this process could inform the implementation of the RWITS-US (or any other) interview model.

Both rapport and gaining co-operation have been shown to be key objectives of informant handlers alongside detecting deception (see Chapter Seven), and whilst deception was not manipulated in the current study, research conducted as part of this thesis (Chapter Eight) found that narrative analysis of a mock-informant account can assist in the identification of deceit. Given that the RWITS-US model is specifically designed to elicit a gossip narrative, the detection of deceit may also benefit from its use, and this would provide another opportunity for future research.

Crucially, field research is also required. Fleming and Rhodes (2017) comment that evidence-based practice needs to be informed by and responsive to practitioner experience, therefore, the inclusion

of practitioner feedback throughout the testing and development process will be critical to the successful evolution of the RWITS-US model.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

The study presented in this chapter adopted a two-staged approach to developing a bespoke interview model for the unique situational dilemma faced by tasked informants and their handlers: (i) developing a conceptual interview model (RWITS-US); (ii) testing the model against a relevant comparator.

Research conducted throughout this thesis was used to design a completely new interview model to holistically address the wide-ranging and complex objectives of an informant handler, whilst acknowledging the narrative contribution of the informant themselves. Then, to establish the potential of this new informant interview model, it was tested against the PEACE interview model in a unique mock-informant experimental paradigm. The resultant RWITS-US interview model is presented as a suitable model that can be employed when interviewing established co-operative informants, and whilst further research is undoubtedly required, statistical analysis suggests that there may be advantages to using the RWITS-US model, especially in terms of establishing relational rapport.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

#### **Chapter Summary**

The legal definition of an informant in England and Wales (as a covert source of information) renders them unique; not only are informants expected to actively gather target information, but they are expected to do this through the use of social relations and social interaction.

Given the unique status of informants, it is perhaps unsurprising that informant handlers have an equally unique range of requirements and objectives when interacting with their informants (Chapters Four, Five, and Seven). The purpose of the current thesis was to develop a bespoke informant interview model that could maximise handler outcomes during an interaction with their informants. This was achieved by adopting a holistic perspective of an informant interview, considering not only handler objectives, but also informant communication strategies. This represents a novel contribution to the research area, and a number of key findings were made throughout the process. The current chapter will discuss these key findings, the strengths and limitations of the thesis, and the implications for future research and practice.

#### **A Moment of Reflection**

It is increasingly accepted, especially within the social sciences, that the role, background and prejudices of the researcher influence the results of the study (Lazard & McAvoy, 2020; Wall, 2006). Reflexive research has evolved in response to this realism, and there is a growing acknowledgement that understanding a researcher's subjective position to the topic being studied can assist in the interpretation (or *re-interpretation*) of results. Indeed, it could be argued that researcher subjectivity is a necessary component to obtaining the results, and that many studies would not have been conceived, or at least, not conceived in their particular way, were it not for the prior experiences of the researcher themselves (Lazard & McAvoy, 2020). Before progressing to discuss the results of this particular thesis then, it is perhaps worthwhile examining my own role, background and prejudices in obtaining them.

The seeds of this particular thesis were sown in the build up to the London 2012 Olympics. As a detective on the Metropolitan Police Counter Terrorism Command, I was assigned to a unit responsible for assessing the veracity of high-risk threat reporting from human sources of information. In preparation, my colleagues and I completed a week-long training course, presented by a university academic, on the subject of *detecting deception*. We were informed that there was no single reliable cue to deceit, and that we should seek to identify a cluster of cues, that we should compare these clusters to an established

baseline of truthful behaviour, and that we should seek to elicit them through the imposition of cognitive load. I was unaware at the time, but the course was in effect a summary of Vrij's (2008) approach to detecting deception.

In the following weeks, I was able to practice these new-found skills. I was deployed with one of my colleagues to meet a human source who had information about an impending terrorist attack at a densely populated transport hub. Relying on the PEACE model, primarily because it was the only interview model we had been taught, and secondly because our main objective was to extract sufficient information to prevent any planned attack, we interviewed the informant over the course of two hours. During that time, we were able to incorporate some of the cognitive tasks we had been taught to detect potential deception, but at the end of the interview neither of us could confidently state whether the behaviours we had observed were signs of deceit, or indeed that our interventions had elicited any cues at all. We were left with a series of questions: which part of the account, if any, constituted a truthful baseline of behaviour? Was the informant anxious because they were lying to the authorities or because they were informing on their associates? Were they afraid of the consequences of deceiving counter-terrorism police, or the consequences of being found out by their extremist friends?

Ultimately, as Fleming and Rhodes (2017) observe, we relied upon our experience as detectives, applying the schemas we had individually acquired to ultimately decide that the source was deceiving us. We were, of course, correct; but I remained plagued by doubts. Had I been right, or had I been lucky? Was I unable to correctly learn and employ the techniques I had been taught, or were the techniques themselves impractical? Or was there something about my experiential learning that was yet to be measured and quantified, but was perhaps equally valid to the empirically tested techniques provided? Was there actually something about the story that was indicative of deceit? These were timely questions; EBP was a relatively new concept (Sherman, 2013) and the CoP, the body in England and Wales responsible for promoting EBP, was not yet incorporated (CoP, 2018). Additionally, inspired by the Iraq War and events at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, academics were beginning to explore issues surrounding HUMINT, and investigate ways that psychological knowledge could be applied to HUMINT practice (Brandon, 2014; Intelligence Science Board Study on Educating Information, 2006).

Self-doubt inspired me to increase my knowledge, and as I learnt more about the subject of investigative and forensic psychology, HUMINT and detecting deception in particular, I reached two conclusions. The first was deductive: many of the techniques being recommended for use on human sources of information, including the PEACE interview model, were in fact developed for use on suspects or witnesses, and did not necessarily account for the situational dilemma of an informant providing incriminating information about their associates. The second was more inductive: senior leaders needed timely intelligence to inform their decision-making; but they also wanted an accuracy assessment of the intelligence provided; handlers had a legal obligation to protect the safety and

anonymity of their informants (ACPO, 2007; Home Office, 2018); but the informant could pose a physical and reputational risk to the handler themselves. This presented handlers with a range of competing requirements that could not all be equally achieved using existing techniques.

This was the background that informed the direction of this thesis. It informed the research questions set and undoubtedly informed the interpretation of results, especially qualitative elements. The study space analysis was designed to examine whether there really was a lack of empirical research specifically designed around an informant dilemma; the practitioner survey sought to expose the reality of competing requirements; the narrative analysis of informant accounts was conducted to explore what it is about a story that might contradict existing schemas and expectations; and an informant specific interview model was designed to provide a bespoke tool to practitioners that does not simply presume transferability from other forensic situations.

As I found my instinctive doubts being increasingly justified by my own empirical results, new doubts began to emerge - that I was using my studies to validate my own beliefs, that my thesis was infected with confirmation and researcher bias and my conclusions were therefore invalid. This chapter will seek to address these final concerns by examining how my own findings fit in to the extant literature. Three key findings will be examined: (i) handlers have a range of complex and interconnected requirements to consider; (ii) informants communicate using a gossip narrative and this presents opportunities for analysis; (iii) a bespoke interview model can provide practitioners with a variety of benefits.

### **Key Finding (i): Handlers Have Complex and Interconnected Requirements**

The literature review conducted as part of Chapters Four and Five identified six categories that were likely objectives (or at least considerations) for informant handlers. As part of this thesis, these were operationalised and presented to practitioners in the form of a survey (Chapter Seven) for the first time. These considerations were: (i) handler personality; (ii) informant motivation; (iii) rapport; (iv) gaining co-operation; (v) detecting deception, and; (vi) obtaining information.

#### ***Complexity of Requirements***

The aim of the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven) was to identify the relative importance of these objectives to informant handlers, and whilst the survey confirmed their overall importance, participants found it difficult to discern which of them was *most* important. However, when forced to choose one of the categories, participants selected *detecting deception* as both the most important consideration and the one requiring further research. Despite this finding, directed content analysis found

that most free text words or phrases related to the concept of *gaining co-operation*. Whilst this initially appears as a discrepancy, a closer examination of responses identified an overriding concern with deceptive or malicious intent. This was a novel result that has so far been ignored by the academic community, and highlights the complexity of requirements faced by handlers; detecting deception does not merely include the identification of lies or fabrications, it also includes the accurate assessment of intent.

Similarly, the concept of obtaining or eliciting information is, for a handler, perhaps more complex than previously assumed by HUMINT researchers. It is clear from the legal definition of a CHIS that informants will be encoding and storing social information, and it was hypothesised that this would result in social memories being recalled as a gossip narrative (Chapter Three). This was evidenced by the analysis of informant accounts conducted in Chapter Eight, and the fact that many of the psychological tools currently recommended to law enforcement practitioners focus on the retrieval of autobiographical memories (i.e., CI, PEACE, Timeline Technique etc.) may explain why many handlers use unstructured interview protocols to elicit information from informants (Granhag et al., 2020; Nunan et al., 2020c).

### ***Inter-connected Requirements***

Participants completing the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven) may have had difficulty identifying which category was most important to them because they are, in fact, all inter-dependent. Thematic content analysis demonstrated that many of the categories overlap and inter-connect, and free-text responses suggest that gaining co-operation may be the most inter-connected category of all. Participants indicated that co-operation is often facilitated by an understanding of the informant's motivation(s), as well as the handler's individual personality and their ability to build rapport. Once co-operation has been gained, this serves to mitigate against deception and enables the collection of target information. Given its centrality to informant handling, it is perhaps unsurprising that words associated with gaining co-operation were referenced most frequently by participants completing the survey.

However, gaining co-operation was ranked mid-table when participants were asked to identify their most important consideration, with detecting deception ranked top. Due to the relationship between co-operation and risk (namely, that a non-cooperative source could present a physical risk) and the similarity between risk and deception (in that a malicious source is disguising their true intent) it seems plausible that these two categories actually overlap. Interpreted this way, there is no discrepancy between participants' desire for more research into detecting deception and the dominance of words associated to gaining co-operation, because they represent the same thing: a requirement to take a potentially hostile source (such as Hassan Youssef; Schirman, 2014) and turn them into a co-operative one.

## **Key Finding (ii): Informants Gossip**

Gossip is the transmission of social information about absent others in the form of a narrative account (Foster, 2004; McAndrew & Milenkovic, 2002; Wert & Salovey, 2004), and the similarity between gossip and the situational dilemma of an informant is obvious. Balancing organisational objectives with informant objectives is recognised as a key skill for informant handlers (Henry et al., 2019), therefore, having established handler objectives (Chapter Seven), narrative analysis was conducted on mock-informant accounts (Chapter Eight) to ascertain what this could reveal about informant objectives. The triangulation of analysis (narrative structure, narrative identity and smallest space analysis) provides evidence that combined narrative analysis of mock-informant accounts is capable of providing insights regarding a range of psychological influences, including deception, motivation, and levels of co-operation.

### ***Deception***

Results from the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven) indicate that handlers rate detecting deception as their most important requirement and the one in need of further research, and when interpreting deception as including malicious intent, the threat posed by a deceptive source would explain why practitioners rate detecting deception so highly. The study conducted as part of Chapter Eight specifically explored mock-informant deception, with a triangulation of analysis being conducted on truthful and deceptive mock-informant accounts using narrative structure, narrative identity and smallest space analysis (SSA).

This triangulation of analysis indicated that deceptive mock-informant accounts contradicted predictions that individuals prefer to misrepresent themselves in the best possible way (DePaulo, et al., 2003; Hargie & Dickson, 2004); instead, deceptive mock-informants preferred to express low potency narrative roles and produced more emotional content. Peace and Sinclair (2012) found that narratives high in emotional content often result in an exaggerated truth bias amongst lay judges, making deceptive narratives more difficult to detect. Consequently, the tendency to present themselves as a *victim* or *tragic hero* (Youngs & Canter, 2012), combined with the use of evaluative and emotive remarks throughout the narrative, may be an attempt by deceptive mock-informants to elicit a sub-conscious truth bias in their listeners (Peace & Sinclair, 2012; ten Brinke & Porter, 2012).

## ***Motivation and Co-operation***

Specifically employing the Narrative Action System Model (Youngs & Canter, 2009; 2012), the study conducted as part of Chapter Eight identified that narrative identity analysis was able to provide a more nuanced understanding of the complex psychological processes underlying an informant dilemma, with the interaction between potency and intimacy providing insights into varying levels of both motivation and co-operation.

Although the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven) identified that understanding informant motivation is a key requirement for informant handlers, providing them with opportunities to gain co-operation and detect deception (Billingsley, 2001; Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Shapiro, 2010), the current understanding of informant motivation is that it is largely based on external factors (Billingsley, 2001; Miller, 2011). However, when examining the narratives of mock-informant participants (Chapter Eight) it was noticeable that motivation did vary between individuals, and when narrative identity was analysed, a lack of motivation appeared to manifest itself as a low potency narrative role amongst truthful informants. When combined with expressed levels of intimacy, a clearer picture of the interaction between motivation and co-operation was obtained. For example, participants expressing a *tragic hero* role, of low potency and low intimacy, were resigned to co-operate, but were not motivated (or capable) to do so. Low potency but high intimacy *victim* narratives on the other hand did not wish to co-operate at all, expressing more loyalty towards the group than to the handler.

Given that the majority of deceptive mock-informants also expressed a low potency narrative role, a lack of motivation / co-operation could serve to confound any practical applications of narrative identity analysis. However, having identified a concern for *deceptive intent* during the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven), an informant lacking in motivation and co-operation could present a potential risk to practitioners, consequently, a low potency narrative identity could merit further scrutiny regardless of whether it was the product of an outright fabrication or a lack of motivation.

### **Key Finding (iii): Practitioners can Benefit from a Bespoke Informant Interview Model**

A holistic approach to the development of a bespoke informant interview model means that the interview model must be able to address handler objectives whilst also providing the flexibility and responsiveness to meet the informant's needs. The RWITS-US model was conceived as an ethical interview model that places an initial emphasis on informant welfare and autonomy; furthermore, it is designed to allow the informant to communicate naturally, whilst still meeting the operational objectives of the handler. Several handler objectives were identified as part of this thesis (see Chapters Four, Five and Seven), and it is worth considering how the RWITS-US model might be able to benefit handlers in

relation to some of those that have been most thoroughly researched; namely, eliciting information, building rapport, gaining co-operation and detecting deception.

### ***Eliciting Information***

The elicitation of information is perhaps the most studied HUMINT research area (i.e., Hope et al., 2019; Kontogianni et al., 2018; Leins et al., 2014), and has recently been measured in relation to informants (Nunan et al., 2020b; Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, & May, 2020), however, in the practitioner survey conducted as part of this thesis (Chapter Seven), it was rated as the category that least required further academic research, and only *handler personality traits* was ranked below it in terms of importance. Despite these findings, it is clear that obtaining information is a key objective for an informant handler (Home Office, 2018), consequently, it is important that a focus on other handler objectives, such as *rapport* and *gaining co-operation*, within the RWITS-US interview model did not result in the loss of intelligence. However, the *information* phase of the RWITS-US model did not simply mirror the *account* phase of the PEACE model; instead, RWITS-US is sensitive to the re-conceptualisation of informants as gossips, and is therefore designed to elicit and probe a gossip narrative. Specifically, the open-ended prompt within the RWITS-US interview focuses on a specific person of interest (rather than an *incident*), and subsequent probing questions are structured to generate a narrative account, rather than simply focusing on themes or chronology. The elicitation of a gossip narrative has the benefits of accessing social memory (McGregor & Holmes, 1999) whilst conforming to an expected social norm (Dunbar, 2004), additionally, a narrative account provides practitioners with opportunities to conduct subsequent narrative analysis (see Chapter Eight).

Despite being tested against a recognised information-gathering interview model (PEACE), results from the study presented in Chapter Nine indicate that there was no discernable difference in the amount of target information revealed between interview conditions. Consequently, in this study at least, the RWITS-US model was able to address a range of practitioner requirements (in particular increased rapport) without any loss in intelligence. Given the additional focus within the RWITS-US model on the tasking process, there may be a cumulative benefit to its use which was not tested as part of this thesis, whereby improved and consistent tasking results in greater recall of target information.

### ***Rapport***

The importance of rapport to informant handlers has been consistently asserted by the academic community (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Henry et al., 2019; Nunan et al., 2020a; Stanier & Nunan, 2021), however, despite recognising the importance of “empathy and showing interest in their own personal

everyday life” (#31), practitioners did not score *rapport* comparatively highly in the survey conducted as part of this thesis (Chapter Seven). Previous research has indicated that behaviour associated with high levels of rapport does result in greater intelligence yield though (Gabbert et al., 2021; Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, & May, 2020), and it was recognised as part of this thesis that the functional rapport established as part of the existing PEACE model may be inadequate for the kind of long term relationship building required of informant handlers. Therefore, the RWITS-US model was designed to increase relational rapport between handler and informant, with the *welfare* phase being used to provide the informant with a sense of autonomy whilst presenting the handler with an opportunity to demonstrate concern, engage active listening and utilise self-disclosures, all of which are recognised interpersonal skills (Hargie & Dickson, 2004).

The RWITS-US model significantly improved self-reported levels of rapport, however, despite previous research indicating that higher levels of rapport correlated with increased intelligence gain (Gabbert et al., 2021; Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, & May, 2020) this was not the case with the RWITS-US model. There are several possible explanations for this. Firstly, it is possible that rapport was not actually established as part of the RWITS-US model. Rapport was measured by the use of a short questionnaire, and whilst the use of questionnaires for measuring rapport is not unusual, the *Rapport Scales for Investigative Interviews and Interrogation, Interviewee version (RS3i)* is more commonly used (Gabbert, et al., 2021). Unfortunately, this is a relatively long-winded tool (21 items, Duke et al., 2018) and the experiment presented in Chapter Nine already involved a lengthy procedure that was designed to measure multiple responses (i.e., motivation, rapport, co-operativeness and information). Still, the possibility exists that the questionnaire employed was an inappropriate measure of rapport, and rapport was not actually established, consequently, there would be no discernable difference in information gain. A further explanation would be that the relationship between rapport and disclosure of information is complex. It could be argued that the relationship is indirect, and that rapport improves co-operation, which in turn prompts disclosure (Evans et al., 2014; Kelly et al., 2013). In the current experiment though, self-reported levels of both rapport and co-operation were higher in the RWITS-US model than the PEACE model, but there was still no statistical difference in the number of intelligence items disclosed. An alternative explanation could be that only a minimal amount of rapport may be required to promote disclosure; the PEACE model is a rapport-based interview model, and the levels of rapport generated by the PEACE model, whilst inferior to the RWITS-US model, may have been sufficient to maximise intelligence gain, therefore, any further increase in rapport did not enjoy a corresponding increase in disclosure. Perhaps a more convincing argument though, is related to the paradigm employed; whilst Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh and May (2020) found a direct relationship between rapport and intelligence gain in their field study of telephone conversations between handlers and informants, there are a number of other potentially confounding variables (such as length

of relationship, nature of tasking, value of intelligence etc.) that were unreported and which might correlate to both rapport and information gain in their study. As such, the influence of rapport on the amount of information gathered from an active, co-operative informant is unclear, and remains an understudied area of research. Consequently, whilst there may be relational benefits to establishing rapport, in situations involving an active informant rapport may not be a necessary component for information gain. This conclusion would explain why *rapport* did not score more highly amongst practitioners completing the survey (Chapter Seven) and why there was no correlation between increased rapport and information within the study presented in Chapter Nine.

Overall, these findings indicate that the relationship between rapport and information gain, at least in an informant scenario, may be more complex than some researchers have previously suggested (i.e., Nunan et al., 2020a; Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh, & May, 2020). However, whilst rapport may not necessarily operate as a means of gaining intelligence (in an informant scenario), it remains the case that rapport is a necessary component of a long-term co-operative relationship (Birkett & Pike, 2017), consequently, the increased rapport established within the RWITS-US model would be a clear benefit to handlers seeking to gain their informant's co-operation.

### ***Gaining Co-operation***

When considering the particular situational dilemma of an informant, the concept of co-operation takes on a broader meaning than has previously been assigned to it in the HUMINT literature. Rather than simply referring to a willingness to divulge passively obtained information (i.e., Alison & Alison, 2017), the co-operation of a tasked informant refers to them adopting an active role in both the collection and dissemination of target intelligence. Given the emphasis on tasking in the CHIS Code of Practice (Home Office, 2018) it was perhaps predictable that this thematic category would emerge as a particular concern of informant handlers (Chapter Seven).

Given the centrality of gaining co-operation to handler objectives, the RWITS-US model was designed to increase co-operation through the *tasking* and *security* phases; in particular, handlers disclosed information to the informant as part of an elaborated context narrative during the tasking phase and demonstrated concern and a collaborative approach during the security phase. Whilst there was no statistically significant increase in co-operation when compared to the PEACE model, there may be cumulative benefits to adopting the RWITS-US approach to gaining co-operation, and this should be explored in a longitudinal between-subjects experiment.

## ***Detecting Deception***

Practitioners rated detecting deception as their most important consideration in the survey conducted as part of this thesis (Chapter Seven), however, whilst deception within a HUMINT context has received research attention (see Vrij & Granhag, 2014 for a review), this has tended to focus on self-transgressionary behaviour, rather than lies about the actions or intentions of a third party. The study conducted as part of Chapter Eight attempted to address this research gap, and the narrative analysis of truthful and deceptive mock-informant accounts demonstrated that there may be real-world benefits to adopting this approach when attempting to detect informant deceit. Consequently, whilst deception was not manipulated as part of the final study (Chapter Nine), findings from Chapter Seven (that detecting deception is a primary concern for informant handlers) and Chapter Eight (that narrative analysis can potentially identify informant deceit) directly influenced the design of the RWITS-US model.

Specifically, the RWITS-US model incorporates pre- and post- interview stages designed to increase opportunities for detecting deceit. This involves identifying a change in an informant's personal circumstances (*Research and Review*) and *understanding the context* of their relationships, to both the PoI and to the handler. A change in circumstances could result in a change of motivation (Billingsley, 2001; Miller, 2011), which could affect an informant's willingness to deceive (Yousef & Brackin, 2010), whilst their relational identity to both the PoI and the handler may also impact upon their ability and willingness to gather and disclose accurate information (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Shapiro, 2006). Additionally, the elicitation prompts employed within the *information* phase of the RWITS-US model are designed to encourage a narrative account. Consequently, the post interview *understanding context* phase should include narrative analysis, with a particular focus on the informant's self-expressed narrative identity. As such, the pre- and post- interview phases of the RWITS-US model are likely to have real-world benefit on the detection of informant deception that is not encapsulated within the existing PEACE model.

## **Strengths and Limitations of Thesis**

The Study Space Analysis conducted as part of this thesis (Chapter Six) identified that there were no previous experimental paradigms specifically designed to examine the performance of an active informant as defined in current legislation (RIPA, 2000). Instead, the majority of experiments examining a HUMINT situation either replicate a mock-witness paradigm (i.e., Hope et al., 2019; Kontogianni et al., 2018; Leins et al., 2014) or the paradigm specifically designed to test the Scharff Technique (i.e., Dawson et al., 2015; Granhag et al., 2015; Oleszkiewicz et al., 2014). Therefore, it is a particular strength of this thesis that two novel paradigms were presented (Chapters Eight and Nine) that replicate the

situational and operational dilemma of an active informant, including three clear phases of an informant deployment: (i) receipt of tasking instructions; (ii) interpersonal engagement with a PoI; (iii) handler debrief. It is anticipated that the experimental paradigms employed within this thesis could continue to evolve to further increase ecological validity. For example, a particular limitation for the final study (Chapter Nine) was the imposition of legal restrictions relating to the Covid-19 pandemic (HMG, 2020), and a potential future iteration of this research could include face-to-face interactions.

A further strength of the current research is the use of the PEACE interview model as a relevant comparator. The Study Space Analysis identified that the most common comparator used in HUMINT paradigms was the Direct Approach. The Direct Approach is a U.S. military interview model that simply recommends putting direct questions to the human source in a business-like manner (Evans et al., 2014; Oleszkiewicz et al., 2014). Conversely, the PEACE model is a well-established rapport-based information-gathering method of interviewing that has continued to evolve since its introduction almost thirty years ago (CPTU, 1992a, b; Walsh & Milne, 2008; MoJ, 2022), and it remains the recommended model for investigative interviewers across many jurisdictions (CoP, 2019; Walsh & Milne, 2008). As such, it is a stern comparator for any new model to be tested against. Importantly, despite the PEACE model being recommended by academics for use in informant interviews (Nunan et al., 2020b; Nunan et al., 2020c; Potts, 2009), this thesis presents the first studies (Chapters Eight and Nine) to utilise the PEACE model in an informant paradigm. When compared directly to the PEACE model, the RWITS-US model did not perform any worse (and, in the case of rapport, performed significantly better) than it; consequently, by employing the PEACE model throughout this thesis, there is a subsequent degree of reassurance for the continued development of the RWITS-US model.

An important principle in the development of the RWITS-US interview model was the adoption of a holistic approach. As the literature review demonstrated (Chapters Four and Five), researchers are aware of the range of requirements that HUMINT practitioners need to consider, however, these individual requirements have often been studied in isolation (Brandon, 2014; Vrij & Granhag, 2014). Results from the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven) showed that the relationship between handler's different objectives is complex, many are inter-connected and some may even be in conflict. Therefore, a bespoke informant interview model needs to be able to address a number of objectives simultaneously, whilst retaining the flexibility to focus on a specific individual objective when required. The unique power dynamics in a handler-informant relationship meant that a holistic approach also needed to consider how an informant might ordinarily choose to exchange information, and how their own objectives might influence this exchange. This had never before been researched by the academic community, and the study presented in Chapter Eight (narrative analysis) is a particular strength of the current thesis.

Importantly, the new RWITS-US model was designed with an awareness of and consideration for The Mendez Principles (APT, 2021). These principles were drafted in recognition of the endemic use of coercive practices for interviewing not only suspects, but also human sources of information across the international community, and provide guidance for the promotion of ethical interviewing. First and foremost, the principles acknowledge that any state-enacted interview ought to be based upon a legal and scientific foundation, and it was the purpose of the current thesis to provide such a foundation for a bespoke informant-interview model. The principles also recognise the importance of adopting a rapport-based information gathering approach to interviewing, and the specific inclusion of a *welfare* phase and a gossip-oriented prompt in the *information* phase of the RWITS-US model highlights this approach. Additionally, the principles also recognise the unreliability of non-verbal and physiological methods of detecting deception (APT, 2021); in response to practitioner concerns around the detection of deception (see Chapter Seven) the current thesis therefore sought to develop a narrative analysis approach to detecting deceit. This approach has been heavily influenced by Interpersonal Deception Theory, which predicts that deceivers will engage in impression management, influenced by their individual objectives, and that this will be expressed in the verbal content of their communication (Burgoon & Buller, 1994).

Ultimately, by being responsive to the unique legislative and operational environment of an informant, this thesis was able to conceive and develop a bespoke interview model designed to meet a range of handler and informant needs. Specifically, the RWITS-US model was designed to engender meaningful rapport (to build a continuous relationship, rather than simply to elicit information) and to gain co-operation whilst simultaneously obtaining information. Statistical analysis demonstrated that the new RWITS-US model achieved exactly that. Given that the RWITS-US model is specifically designed to elicit a narrative account, and that narrative analysis was shown to provide important insights into informant's motivation, co-operation and potential deception (Chapter Eight), it may be that even slight statistical advantages in rapport, co-operativeness and information gain is sufficient for practitioners to justify its use. Additionally, a more structured approach to the pre- and post- interview phases of the RWITS-US model, may produce benefits to practitioners that cannot be measured in the laboratory. Such immeasurable advantages could encourage its adoption, even where the measurable advantages are slight.

## **Implications and Recommendations**

### ***Drivers for Future Research***

At the outset of this thesis, several drivers for research were identified. Throughout the course of the thesis the requirement for further relevant academic research has been re-enforced. Overall, the

importance of informants to law enforcement decision-making, the current drive towards EBP, and the lack of relevant research will continue to generate a demand for further academic study.

### **The Importance of Informants.**

The importance of HUMINT has been recognised by academics (Coulam, 2006; Granhag & Mac Giolla, 2014; Vrij, 2014), and by Governments (Home Office, 2021; Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 2005), and was re-affirmed by many of the practitioners who completed the survey as part of this thesis (Chapter Seven). It is perhaps unsurprising that practitioners espouse the importance of their own particular role, and other practitioner surveys have made similar findings (Nunan et al., 2020a; Nunan et al., 2020b; Stanier & Nunan, 2021). However, perhaps more uniquely, the current study identified potential tension between informant handlers and senior managers, with one particular handler complaining that senior leaders are motivated by, "... a desire to give the public a visible police presence" (#33). This perhaps manifests itself in a lack (or at least a *perceived* lack) of support from senior leaders. One thing that was identified by the practitioner survey, and which finds support in the literature, is that informant handling is both stressful and dangerous (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016), and participants completing the survey suggested that any evidence-based research capable of addressing their specific objectives would be welcomed.

### **Evidence-Based Policing.**

The UK's CoP is committed to promoting EBP (CoP, 2020). The CoP's concept of evidence is a broad one, with the aim of incorporating the 'best available' evidence into practice (CoP, 2020). Whilst this phraseology strikes a pragmatic tone, it is clear that the best available evidence should still be based on empirical research (Heaton & Tong, 2015; Sherman, 2013; CoP, 2020). However, as exemplified by participant responses to the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven), in particular references to human intuition (#3), and the observation that "... some handlers are more successful than others" (#10), informant handling as a specialisation could still be seen as a craft. Fleming and Rhodes (2017) observe that police officers often describe their profession in terms of a craft, which they define as "... practical beliefs and practices" or "... contextual knowledge" (pp.9-10). This is often evidenced by officers relying on experience as a means of making judgements. Again, this can be observed in the practitioner survey when participant #3 states: "I knew when they [informants] were lying but I didn't know why I knew".

There are limitations to relying on craft or experiential knowledge (Fleming & Rhodes, 2017); as the quote above from the survey sample exemplifies, relying on experience may lead to decisions based on feeling rather than logic (Dresser, 2019). Additionally, maintaining a culture of craft knowledge

is at odds with the impetus towards an EBP model (Dresser, 2019), and there is a risk that informant handlers relying on their experience to make decisions could come in to conflict with colleagues and senior leaders who are increasingly educated in the benefits of an evidence-based approach (Palmer et al., 2019; Sherman, 2013). The drive towards EBP was partly prompted by a governmental desire for greater accountability from a public institution (Palmer et al., 2019; Sherman, 2013), and it could be argued that the covert nature of informant handling has insulated it from the incursions of an evidence-based culture (Billingsley, 2009). However, the ongoing Undercover Policing Inquiry (2021) and Operation Kenova (2021) demonstrate that once covert policing crafts are coming under increasing public scrutiny, and it can be anticipated that there will be a growing expectation for senior leaders to legitimise their decisions on the grounds of an extant evidence-base (Sherman, 2013). It is foreseeable then, that the organisational desire for EBP will increasingly influence informant handling.

### **A Lack of Relevant Research.**

Perhaps the most striking result from the Study Space Analysis (Chapter Six) was the revelation that not a single study has researched an active informant scenario. It is worth noting that the purpose of a CHIS authorisation under RIPA 2000 is to allow handlers to task their informants (Home Office, 2018; IPCO, 2020). Consequently, all authorised CHIS are active informants; a situation which would appear to be relatively normal in other jurisdictions such as the U.S. (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016) and Israel (Hess & Amir, 2002), as well as international counter-terrorism investigations (Schirman, 2014; Storm et al., 2015; Yousef & Brackin, 2010). Secondly, prior to 2018 only one study (Leins et al., 2014) had used a non-custodial scenario, with the remaining studies either explicitly stating that the participant was to imagine that they were in police custody or implying that they were – for instance, throughout the series of studies examining the Scharff Technique the authors often state that “... the Scharff Technique is primarily aimed for custodial settings” (Granhag et al., 2015, p. 108). IPCO acknowledge that CHIS are authorised within prison, but note that these are relatively few, and recommend authorising even fewer (IPCO, 2020), consequently it seems reasonable to assume that the majority of registered informants are operating and interacting with their handlers in a non-custodial environment. This supposition is supported by observational studies (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002) and anecdotal accounts by former sources (Yousef & Brackin, 2010; Storm et al., 2015). Indeed, Storm claims that the majority of meetings with his handlers were held in bars and hotels, a world away from the formalities of a custodial environment.

In summary, the situation presumed to apply to the majority of real-world human source interactions – namely an interview with an active source in a non-custodial environment – has been neglected by the scientific community. Whilst the current thesis attempts to address this gap in research

by employing more ecologically valid informant paradigms (Chapters Eight and Nine), this lack of relevant research has clear implications for practitioners and policy makers seeking to implement policy on the basis of an established evidence base (CoP, 2020; Heaton & Tong, 2015); if those currently responsible for the management and handling of informants in England and Wales were to turn to the scientific community for guidance, there is not a single study to date that would apply to their everyday experiences (ACPO, 2007; Home Office, 2018). In such a situation they are likely to borrow other methods from across the investigative community and attempt to successfully apply them in an informant context; assuming transferability where none has yet been proven. This perhaps explains why the polygraph, a technique recommended for use on monitored sex offenders (Gannon et al., 2012), is now being used on counter-terrorism informants (Wilford, 2017).

### ***Recommendations for Future Research***

HUMINT is capable of informing decision-making at the highest levels (Drogin, 2007; Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 2005; Storm et al., 2015; Yousef & Brackin, 2010), and it can be anticipated that practitioners and policy makers will turn to science to assist in the management and evaluation of human sources (Heaton & Tong, 2015; Wilford, 2017). However, the current thesis has identified a number of areas that researchers should consider if they are to provide meaningful guidance to practitioners.

#### **Clearly Define the Subject of Research.**

The Study Space Analysis (Chapter Six) identified that the broad definitions of *HUMINT* and of a *human source* have served to confuse the extant study area. Researchers would therefore be advised to be cognisant of, and explicitly state, the legal and practical framework their research is designed to inform; a number of studies examining *intelligence interviews* appear to recreate situations similar to those of a traditional suspect scenario, or a scenario involving several suspects. Such studies imply transferrability and ecological validity where it is yet to be demonstrated; not only do they confuse the study space, but they are likely to confuse policy makers also.

#### **Consider the Inter-connectivity of Outcomes.**

Despite this definitional confusion, a review of the extant HUMINT literature identified six thematic categories that were believed to be important objectives for HUMINT practitioners across jurisdictions. As such, many of them, in particular obtaining information and detecting deception

(Brandon, 2014; Vrij & Granhag, 2014), have been subjected to empirical research. However, much of the research conducted to date has focussed on a single objective in isolation. Based upon findings from the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven), future research should be cognisant of the inter-connectivity of the various thematic categories and examine ways to balance the competing demands that are placed on practitioners.

### **Explore New Areas of Research.**

Given the unique legislative and operational environment in the UK, as well as the inter-connectivity of potentially competing requirements (i.e., building rapport and detecting deception), the transferrability of tools and techniques designed to assist law enforcement in other forensic situations, such as suspect or witness interviews, cannot be assumed. Indeed, detecting deception research provides an example of this misassumption; analysis of the practitioner survey (Chapter Seven) was able to identify a concept of deception that has not previously been considered within the HUMINT literature, namely, deceptive or malicious intent. This form of deceit appears to be an overriding concern for practitioners, directly influencing the results of the survey. Therefore, understanding this form of deception and providing practical tools that could be applied by informant handlers to detect it, would be a potential area of future research.

Other potential areas of future research would include developing a greater understanding of handler personality traits. This was the third most popular choice among participants completing the practitioner survey when asked which category requires further research, and themes associated to handler personality emerged throughout the thematic content analysis of the final open-ended question. Participants seemed to suggest that there may be relational benefits to matching a handler's personality type with that of the informant, therefore, understanding which personality traits would be most suitably matched presents a potential area of future psychological research.

Furthermore, it is recognised that informant motivation is changeable (Billingsley, 2001; Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016), consequently an area of potential future research would be to examine *how* practitioners might be able to exert a positive influence on informant motivation. Understanding that there may be a correlation between low motivation and low potency narrative identities (Chapter Eight) could inspire further research; for example, the priming of a high potency identity might produce a high potency narrative, which may increase the informants underlying levels of motivation.

Additional opportunities for further research arise from the operationalised concepts of rapport and co-operation, which take on unique meanings when applied to the situational dilemma of an informant as an individual who must both gather and disclose target information. The RWITS-US model (Chapter Nine) applied a variety of techniques to successfully facilitate both rapport and co-operation,

and there may be benefit in exploring the individual elements employed to ascertain their impact on overall rapport and cooperativeness.

This thesis also considered informants as social actors, directly involved in obtaining and exchanging social information. Such a conceptualisation has implications for both memory and deception, for example, social information is often cued by personal associations (Hills & Pachur, 2012) and recalled in the form of gossip (McAndrew & Milenkovic, 2002; McGregor & Holmes, 1999), consequently, various mnemonic techniques may perform differently within this framework. Likewise, the interpersonal interaction between handler and informant is likely to prompt a deceptive informant to adopt impression management techniques (Burgoon & Buller, 1994), and the study conducted in Chapter Eight found some evidence of this in a mock-informant paradigm. Therefore, exploring new ways of eliciting social information and detecting interpersonal deception within an informant specific paradigm would provide a new avenue of research.

### **Development of the RWITS-US Interview Model.**

This thesis also proposes a bespoke informant interview model that can be applied by practitioners. However, Ziliak (2019) argues that before scientific research can be used to inform policy decisions it must first undergo a meta-analysis. It would therefore be beneficial to conduct further research exploring the efficacy of the proposed RWITS-US model; such research should seek to replicate results across various modes of communication and in various settings. It is foreseeable that the evolution of the RWITS-US model would benefit from both laboratory and field research, and researchers should therefore seek to engage practitioners in its future development.

### ***Recommendations for Practice***

There is increasing levels of public scrutiny on the use of HUMINT and the conduct of CHIS (both informants and undercover police officers; i.e., Operation Kenova, 2021; Undercover Policing Inquiry, 2021). It is therefore foreseeable that, whilst informants themselves will remain covert, the policies and decisions surrounding their use and conduct will be increasingly scrutinised and subject to public accountability. This thesis has examined a number of psychological concepts that are likely to influence the management of informants, consequently, a number of tentative recommendations can also be made for practitioners.

### **Handler Selection.**

There is debate in the literature as to whether the personality traits of a successful handler can be learnt (Redlich et al., 2014) or whether handlers need to be pre-selected (Henry et al., 2019), however, findings from the practitioner survey conducted as part of this thesis (Chapter Seven) suggest that it may not be so dichotomous. Attributes such as the ability to demonstrate empathy and genuine interest, as well as being "... open, honest and professional" (#9), could be improved through training, however, individual differences can be maximised by ensuring the most appropriate handler is paired with the most receptive informant. Consequently, rather than selecting a homogenous group of practitioners with similar characteristics (Henry et al., 2019), law enforcement agencies should seek to employ a diverse range of personality types across the handler population, as well as developing the ability to remotely assess the personality of current or potential informants. This would allow handlers and informants to be appropriately paired.

### **Conduct Narrative Analysis of Informant Accounts.**

This thesis has demonstrated that practitioners can adopt a non-interventionary approach to detecting deceit, and that a narrative analysis of naturally occurring informant accounts could identify deception, as well as providing insights into levels of motivation and co-operation (Chapter Eight). Therefore, practitioners should record and transcribe their informant interviews and conduct both structural and identity analysis on the informants narrative account. To facilitate narrative analysis, practitioners should consider employing the RWITS-US model when interviewing informants; whilst statistical advantages may be slight, this model is designed to meet a number of practitioner objectives as well as facilitating a gossip narrative that can be subjected to subsequent analysis. Ultimately, narrative analysis could be used to create a relational loop, whereby subsequent interviews are adapted to complement the informant's dominant narrative identity, thereby maximising interview outcomes.

### **Scientific Collaboration.**

Crucially, practitioners should be encouraged to become involved throughout the testing and development of the RWITS-US model. Fleming and Rhodes (2017) comment that evidence-based practice needs to be informed by and responsive to practitioner experience, therefore, field research and practitioner feedback will be critical to the successful evolution of the RWITS-US (or any other bespoke informant interview) model.

## **Conclusion**

The development of a bespoke informant interview model represents a unique contribution to research. Whilst other interview models exist, these have been developed for use in other forensic situations, such as witness or suspect interviews, and as the research conducted throughout this thesis has demonstrated, the legislative and operational status of a tasked informant (i.e., CHIS) combined with the complex and competing requirements of informant handlers means that transferability across different forensic and legal situations cannot be assumed. The current RWITS-US model is the first to have been developed to address this unique situational dilemma.

Development of the model progressed through a number of stages, each of which advanced the current research area. The process of conducting a Study Space Analysis resulted in the realisation that there were no published studies using an experimental paradigm simulating the active role of an informant. However, the experimental paradigms employed as part of this thesis (Chapters Eight and Nine) were specifically designed to simulate the role of a tasked informant; namely, participants were provided with mock-informant tasking, they were required to interact with person(s) of interest to obtain target information, and they were aware that they would subsequently be interviewed about this information. The development and deployment of these experimental paradigms present a further unique contribution to the research area. Additionally, whilst smallest space, narrative identity and narrative structure analysis have all previously been employed in investigative / forensic scenarios, the research conducted as part of this thesis is the first time that a triangulation of these methods has been used to examine transcripts produced in a mock-informant paradigm (Chapter Eight). The successful use of this combined analysis indicates that these methods are transferable to a mock-informant paradigm, and could consequently be recommended to practitioners in the field.

Indeed, the exploratory nature of much of the research conducted as part of this thesis means that the actual contribution is one of opening up the area for future research. Whilst there have been a number of practitioner surveys in recent years, the one conducted as part of this thesis (Chapter Seven) was the first to establish the relative importance and inter-connectivity of a variety of practitioner objectives that are likely to benefit from future study. The author has already published some of the findings from this thesis in a peer-reviewed journal (see Moffett et al., 2021), and other research papers have been submitted for publication in an attempt to expand the research area. Additionally, a brief research summary has been comprised for circulation amongst practitioners in the hope that findings from this thesis can benefit practitioners in a relatively unique, under-researched and vital area of law enforcement and national security.

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# Appendices

## **Appendix A**

Ref: 9699/2018

Thank you for submitting the ethical approval form for the project 'Inside the shadows: A practitioners view of human source intercatons' (Lead Investigator:Lee Moffett). Expected to run from 01/02/2019 to 31/05/2019.

Based on your answers the University Ethics Committee grants its approval for your project to progress. Please be aware that if you make any significant changes to your project then you should complete this form again as further review may be required. If you have any queries please contact [res.policy@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:res.policy@ncl.ac.uk)

Best wishes

Policy & Information Team, Newcastle University Research Office

[res.policy@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:res.policy@ncl.ac.uk)

## Appendix B



Lee Moffett, MSc BA(Hons)  
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NE1 7RU  
**February 2019**

1<sup>st</sup>

Email: L.Moffett2@newcastle.ac.uk

Dear Recipient Name

**Inside the shadows: A practitioners view of a human source interaction.**

I am currently conducting an online survey as part of my PhD research. The aim of the survey is to identify the concerns of practitioners responsible for the handling of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS).

Recently, a body of academic literature has been published advocating a number of interview techniques designed to meet the objectives of an intelligence interviewer. However, without consulting those who will be expected to implement these techniques, there is a risk that they will be rejected. The goal of my PhD is to design an interview model which will directly address the concerns of practitioners in the UK.

I understand that the methodology used when meeting a CHIS is necessarily covert, as are the identities of both CHIS and CHIS handlers, therefore the survey has been designed to protect the anonymity of respondents and specifically avoids questions of methodology or anything that might compromise a CHIS. There is no compulsion for respondents to complete the survey, they can leave questions blank or end the survey at any time. Anonymity is ensured at all stages.

I am hoping to circulate the survey as widely as possible to ensure that a range of practitioners are represented and would be grateful if you would consider disseminating the survey to dedicated source handlers within your force area. The survey can be found via the attached link: [http://nclpsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0ex1BKsOv96sNbT](http://nclpsych.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0ex1BKsOv96sNbT)

If you have any further questions or concerns, I would be happy to address these on the email address above, or you can contact my Director of Studies, Professor Gavin Oxburgh at [gavin.oxburgh@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:gavin.oxburgh@ncl.ac.uk). Many thanks in advance.

Yours sincerely,

Lee Moffett

## **Participant Information**

### **A practitioner's view of human source interactions.**

I am currently conducting a practitioner survey which will form part of my PhD research with the Institute of Neuroscience/School of Psychology at Newcastle University. The survey will seek to understand the dynamics of an interaction with a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS). Specifically, what current and former source handlers believe is important when handling a CHIS.

If you choose to take part you will be asked to complete an online questionnaire about things previous researchers have found to be important to human intelligence professionals, and you will have an opportunity to provide your own comments to help researchers understand these things better.

Researchers are aware of the sensitive nature of human intelligence and the importance of confidentiality. You will not be asked to provide any identifying details and whilst the answers provided will be used as part of the analysis, the online questionnaire itself will remain confidential.

Participation in the survey is completely voluntary, and you can refuse to take part in any aspect of the study at any time, either before or during the survey. You do not have to answer any questions that you are not comfortable with and you will not be asked to provide any specific details which might compromise your sources or methodology. Once you have completed the survey, you can still ask for your answers to be withdrawn from the study at any time up until publication.

Results from this survey will form part of my PhD thesis and any subsequent publication. If you have any questions or would like any further information, please contact me at:

[L.Moffett2@Newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:L.Moffett2@Newcastle.ac.uk), or my supervision team:

Professor Gavin Oxburgh at [gavin.oxburgh@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:gavin.oxburgh@newcastle.ac.uk),

[Dr Steven Watson](mailto:Dr Steven Watson) at [steven.watson2@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:steven.watson2@newcastle.ac.uk),

Professor Fiona Gabbert at [f.gabbert@gold.ac.uk](mailto:f.gabbert@gold.ac.uk)

**Participant Consent Form**

A practitioner's view of human source interactions.

- I confirm that I have read the attached Participant Information relating to this study and understand that I may ask questions regarding the study, via email, at any time.
- I understand that I have the right to inform the research team that I wish to withdraw from the study at any time prior to publication.
- I understand that I do not have to answer any questions that I am not comfortable with, by leaving them blank.
- I agree to provide information as part of this research on the understanding that the research team will take all reasonable steps to protect my privacy and anonymity.
- I understand that the information obtained during this study will only be used as part of the PhD research and any publications that may arise from it.
- I understand that any complaints regarding this research can be made by email to the Newcastle University ethics committee at [res.policy@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:res.policy@ncl.ac.uk).
- I confirm I am over the age of 18 years.
- I agree to take part in this study under the conditions outlined above.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Print: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

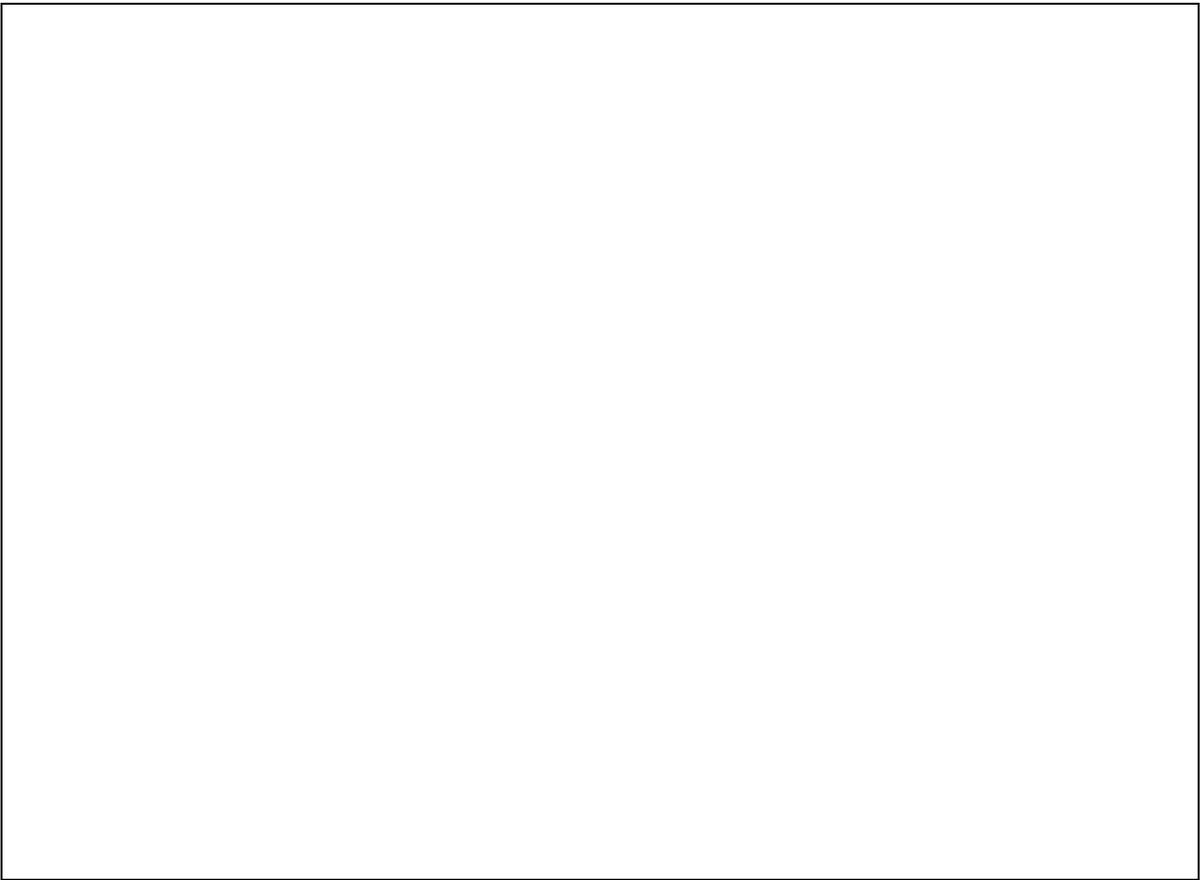
**Appendix E**

**Question Sheet**

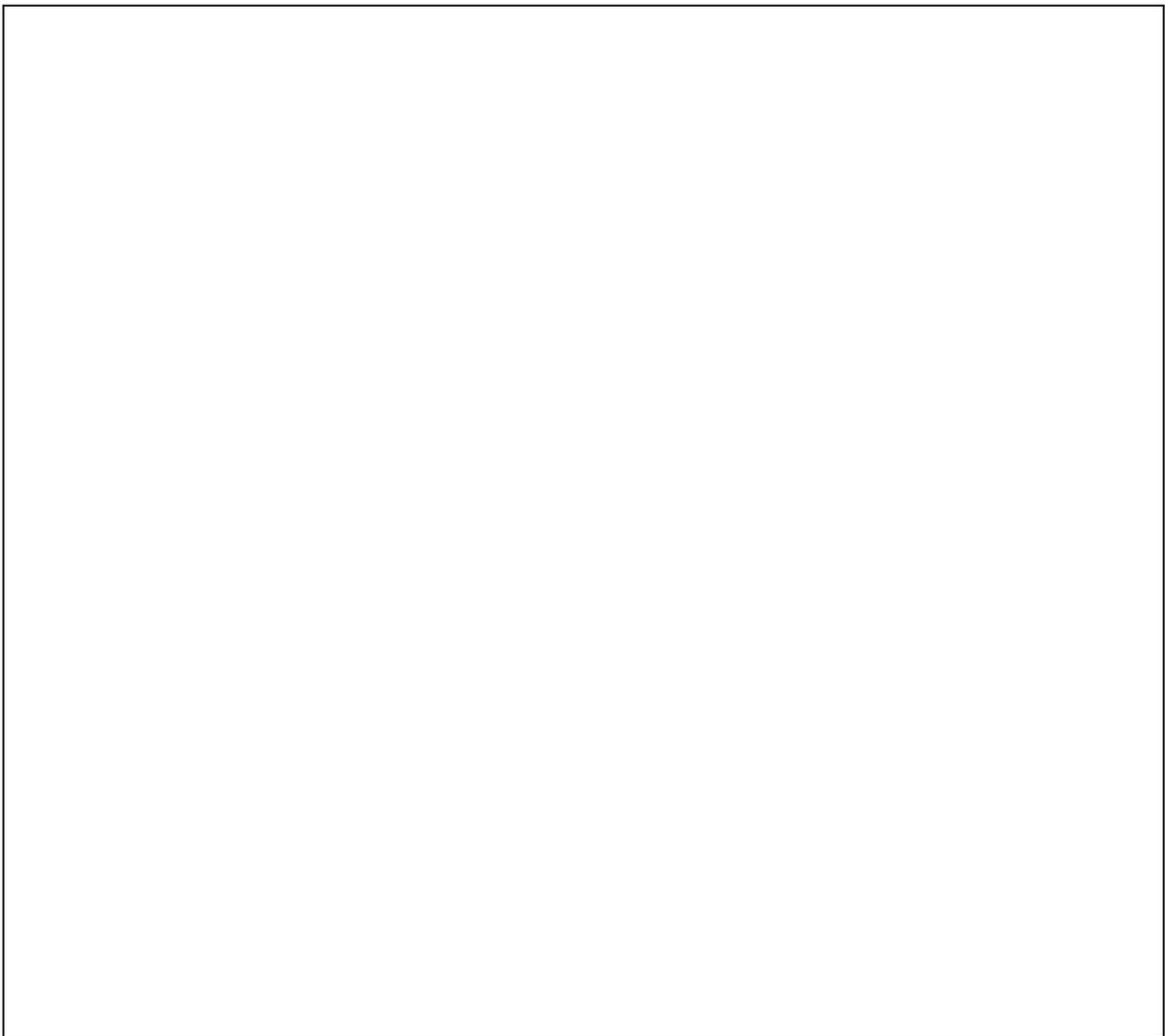
In the space provided below, please list as many words as you can think of which you associate with the word "CHIS".

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to list words associated with "CHIS".

In the space provided below, please list as many words as you can think of which you associate with the phrase "CHIS Handler".

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to list words associated with the phrase "CHIS Handler".

In the space provided below, please list as many words as you can think of which you associate with the phrase "CHIS meeting".

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to list words associated with the phrase "CHIS meeting".

As a CHIS handler, what are your main considerations when handling a CHIS?



Handler Personality Traits:

On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being of least importance, 10 being of highest importance), please rate the importance of handler personality when handling a CHIS.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Rapport:

On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being of least importance, 10 being of highest importance), please rate the importance of rapport when handling a CHIS.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Motivation:

On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being of least importance, 10 being of highest importance), please rate the importance of understanding CHIS motivation when handling a CHIS.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Gaining Cooperation:

On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being of least importance, 10 being of highest importance), please rate the importance of gaining the cooperation of a CHIS when handling them.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Obtaining Information:

On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being of least importance, 10 being of highest importance), please rate the importance of obtaining information from a CHIS when handling them.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Detecting Deception:

On a scale of 1 – 10 (1 being of least importance, 10 being of highest importance), please rate the importance of detecting deception when handling a CHIS.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Scientific Research:

Please indicate with an X which one of the aspects of handling a CHIS you believe requires more scientific / psychological research to improve working practices:

Handler Personality	
Rapport	
CHIS Motivation	
Gaining Cooperation	

Obtaining Information	
Detecting Deception	
Other (please state)	

Please provide the following information:

- Age:
- Gender:
- Length of service as a CHIS handler:

Please use the space below to add any further comments which you believe may be relevant to this research, or to elaborate on any of the answers provided:

## **Participant De-Brief Sheet**

### **How do you get the best from a Covert Human Intelligence Source?**

Thank you for taking part in this study. Recent research on human intelligence (HUMINT) has focussed on detainee interviews in the USA, meaning that the views of UK practitioners are unrepresented. Consequently, the aim of this study was to gain an understanding of what UK practitioners felt was important when handling a CHIS.

All participants were asked to rate the importance of various factors which previous researchers have suggested are the main objectives of human intelligence practitioners and were given the opportunity to add their own comments. The results of this survey will be used to design a bespoke model for interviewing CHIS which directly addresses the priorities of practitioners.

Currently, academics recommend a number of interview models designed for gathering intelligence from a human source, however, without a practitioner's perspective, these models risk being rejected. It is anticipated that results from this research will be used to inform the progress of future studies and will hopefully benefit future generations of HUMINT practitioners.

If this study raised any individual concerns, if you have any further questions about the research, or wish to make a complaint, then please do not hesitate to contact me at:

[L.Moffett2@Newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:L.Moffett2@Newcastle.ac.uk), or my supervision team:

Professor Gavin Oxburgh at [gavin.oxburgh@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:gavin.oxburgh@newcastle.ac.uk),

[Dr Steven Watson](mailto:Dr Steven Watson) at [steven.watson2@newcastle.ac.uk](mailto:steven.watson2@newcastle.ac.uk),

Professor Fiona Gabbert at [f.gabbert@gold.ac.uk](mailto:f.gabbert@gold.ac.uk)

Alternatively, please feel free to contact Newcastle University ethics committee at: [res.policy@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:res.policy@ncl.ac.uk)

Thank you again for your time and your interest.

**Briefing Sheet**

Information Management Study

I am currently conducting an information management study which will form part of my PhD research thesis. The study will explore how different individuals approach an interview with a police officer when they are required to manage the information they are prepared to disclose, and may require participants to lie to the interviewing officer.

The study seeks to build on existing research which examined the strategies employed by convicted criminals when being interviewed by police. Participants will be asked to engage in a “role play” scenario prior to being interviewed about it; this interview will be audio recorded. Following the interview participants will be asked to identify which strategies they employed. Both the “role play” and the interview are expected to last no more than fifteen minutes each, however, some participants may experience a delay between the role play and the interview, therefore, volunteers should anticipate the study lasting approximately 90 minutes.

The findings will only be held and used for the purpose of this study; they will form part of my PhD thesis and any subsequent publication. Names and any other identifying details will be omitted from the study in order to ensure privacy and anonymity; any other details or information provided can be removed from the study at any time at the participant’s request. Volunteers can refuse to take part in any aspect of the study at any time before or during the study; furthermore, participants can request that their data is withdrawn from the study at any time.

Many thanks,

Lee

## **Participant Consent Form**

### Consent Form: Information Management Study

- I have read the attached briefing sheet and have had any questions I may have had answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may ask any further questions at any time during the study.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and do not have to take part in any aspect of the study that I am not comfortable with.
- I agree to provide the researcher with information as part of this study on the understanding that my privacy and anonymity will be protected and that I have the right to omit or withdraw any data at any time, during or after the study.
- I understand that the data obtained during this study will only be used as part of the dissertation project and any publications that may arise from it.
- I agree to the interview being audio recorded for future transcription as part of this study only.
- I confirm I am over the age of 18 years.
- I agree to take part in this study under the conditions set out above.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Print: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix I

### Role Player – Scenario Brief

#### Pre-Planning Brief (all roles)

You are a member of a group of animal rights activists. You are about to attend a meeting with three other activists to discuss a planned “action”. The target of this action is a warehouse belonging to a pharmaceutical company which is known to test its products on live animals. Your group has surveyed the warehouse and the findings are attached below.





## **Role A**

Having studied the premises you believe that you will be able to gain entry and graffiti these premises with political slogans. As a committed and long standing member of the group you should take a leading role in planning the “action” and persuading the other members to agree with your plan.

### **Post-Planning Brief**

You have been arrested by police. You were arrested near to your home shortly after leaving the meeting. All you were told is that you have been arrested on suspicion of conspiring to commit criminal damage.

You have been transported to a nearby police station and are about to be interviewed regarding the offence. You have decided to **lie** to the interviewer. You must convince the interviewer that there is no such conspiracy.

You now have approximately five minutes to consider how you will achieve this deception.

## **Role B**

Having studied the premises you believe that you will be able to gain entry and graffiti these premises with political slogans. As a committed and long standing member of the group you should take a leading role in planning the “action” and persuading the other members to agree with your plan.

### **Post-Planning Brief**

You have been arrested by police. You were arrested near to your home shortly after leaving the meeting. All you were told is that you have been arrested on suspicion of conspiring to commit criminal damage.

You have been transported to a nearby police station and are about to be interviewed regarding the offence. You have decided to ***tell the truth*** to the interviewer. You should confess to taking part in the conspiracy.

You now have approximately five minutes to consider how you will communicate this confession.

## **Role C**

Unknown to the other members of the group, you are an undercover police informant. Your purpose is to attend the meeting so that you can inform your police handler of the proposed plan. You must show enough “verbal enthusiasm” for the plan to maintain your cover, but must not take a leading role in the discussion.

### **Post-Planning Brief**

You have been called to a meeting by your police handler. You were contacted shortly after leaving the meeting and have been told that your handler wants to de-brief you about what occurred.

You have been transported to a secure premises and are about to be de-briefed regarding the meeting. You have decided to ***tell the truth*** to your handler. You should provide a true account of the plans.

You now have approximately five minutes to consider how you will communicate this.

## **Role D**

Unknown to the other members of the group, you are an undercover police informant. Your purpose is to attend the meeting so that you can inform your police handler of the proposed plan. You must show enough “verbal enthusiasm” for the plan to maintain your cover, but must not take a leading role in the discussion.

### **Post-Planning Brief**

You have been called to a meeting by your police handler. You were contacted shortly after leaving the meeting and have been told that your handler wants to de-brief you about what occurred.

You have been transported to a secure premises and are about to be de-briefed regarding the meeting. You have decided to *lie* to your handler. You should inform your handler that the group intend to commit a terrorist attack.

You now have approximately five minutes to consider how you will communicate this deception.

**Debrief Sheet**

Information Management Study

Thank you for taking part in this study, I hope you found it interesting.

The purpose of the study was to provide different participants with different roles in order to examine the strategies they employed during interview; some of the participants were truthful suspects, others were deceitful suspects, whilst some were truthful informants and others were deceitful informants.

The interviews will now be transcribed and analysed for any cues to deceit; these will be matched to the different roles performed and the strategies employed. My interest in this area of research originated from the Iraqi defector codenamed Curveball, who provided false intelligence which led the US and UK to invade Iraq. It is hoped that this research will go some way to assisting intelligence officers in identifying deceitful informants and may ultimately assist senior leaders in their decision-making process.

If this study has raised any individual concerns, or you have any further questions about the research, then please do not hesitate to contact.

Thank you again for your time and interest,

All the best,

Lee

## Appendix K

### Transcript Analysis

#### Key to colour coded clauses:

Abstract

Orientation

Complicating Action

Narrative Clause

Evaluation

Resolution

Coda

#### Narrative 1

##### Free narrative response:

Yeah ok so I'm er an undercover police officer erm and I attended this meeting for animal rights activists erm and what we're going to do is we're going to hit this erm it's like a er animal testing er warehouse erm now there are three other people who are going to be involved in this erm actual incident erm it's planned for this Sunday it's actually going to take place at seven o'clock but we're going to meet up at Kempston Hardwick train station three of us erm we're going to be picked up by one of the people who's involved in it he's going to pick us up in his car with all the equipment like bolt croppers and paint and everything like that erm we're going to go along manor road to the perimeter of the actual erm location and penetrate through the fence using bolt croppers and then actually break in to the warehouse erm there's going to be damage in spray paint inside the property and also spray painting outside of the property erm I think when I get there I'm probably I'm going to advise that I be the lookout for the incident erm don't know how long it's going to take obviously but we're planning to then get back into the vehicle and head back to the train station the three of us will be dropped off and then G will drive off and take the car basically

##### Clause Analysis

1. Yeah ok so I'm er an undercover police officer
2. and I attended this meeting for animal rights activists
3. and what we're going to do is
4. we're going to hit this erm it's like a er animal testing er warehouse
5. now there are three other people who are going to be involved in this erm actual incident
6. it's planned for this Sunday
7. it's actually going to take place at seven o'clock
8. but we're going to meet up at Kempston Hardwick train station

9. three of us we're going to be picked up by one of the people who's involved in it
10. he's going to pick us up in his car with all the equipment like bolt croppers and paint and everything like that
11. we're going to go along manor road to the perimeter of the actual erm location
12. and penetrate through the fence using bolt croppers
13. and then actually break in to the warehouse
14. there's going to be damage in spray paint inside the property
15. and also spray painting outside of the property
16. I think when I get there I'm probably I'm going to advise that I be the lookout for the incident
17. don't know how long it's going to take obviously
18. but we're planning to then get back into the vehicle
19. and head back to the train station
20. the three of us will be dropped off
21. and then G will drive off
22. and take the car basically

## Narrative 2

### **Free response narrative:**

Well look I'll be totally honest [inaudible] I'm quite worried about what we discussed at the meeting don't know I think you know I don't want any kind of part really about the only thing is though is as the plan's evolved I've kind of become more and more entrenched in that but the only thing I want to mention right from the beginning about the kind of path it's actually going in so I thought I better let you know so you can kind of like work out what happened so maybe we can come up we can pull the stops out but I want anything to come back to me okay I want to make that clear okay I don't want anything coming back to me anything [inaudible] but again I don't want anything coming back to me I want to make that absolutely clear okay I won't be you know I won't be able to deal with this situation any more okay alright okay there's going to be a situation where the girl is going to go and do a recce on a premises the week before we're going to go out and do the job she's going to go out and do the recce and have a look for security for us okay when what's going to happen after that we're going to go and meet round er young lads place and we're going to over what she's seen [inaudible] the tall fella he's going to go and he's going to pull a hire car and we're going to get the hire car and utilise that on the job we've all been tasked to go and get balaclavas to hide our identity okay we've all been given a task, the girl's doing the reconnaissance, tall man's going to get the hire car and the young lad he's going to go and get the spray paint okay I've been tasked to get the bolt croppers okay what we're going to do then once we've done once we've done the reconnaissance you know once we've had a meeting on the

Wednesday what we're going to do is we're going to meet up I've got to drive down and put my car in the wooded area near the near the warehouse and from what I look at it on the plan it's to the right hand side of the road [inaudible] to change into the other what we're going to do is go and meet up in the pub I think it's called the chimney close or something like that we're going to meet up in the pub car park and then what we're going to do we're going to meet up in the pub car park the tall man's going to drive us to the post and then I'm going to use the bolt croppers to get in and then we're going to spray inside this place all with slogans like political slogans like animal rights and stuff like that anti-vivisection stuff like that okay and then we're going to get back in the motor then we're going to drive off but what we're going to try and do ditch the motor put our kit in it fry our kit then we're going to jump in my motor then we're going to make off the girl is going to be the lookout the whole time okay [inaudible] but I want you to know like I say you know I've had to tell you this because I'm in a very delicate situation okay so I'm letting you know what the score is but again I can't have anything coming back to me otherwise it's not going to work do you understand

### Clause Analysis

1. Well look I'll be totally honest
2. I'm quite worried
3. about what we discussed at the meeting
4. don't know I think you know I don't want any kind of part really
5. about the only thing is though is as the plan's evolved I've kind of become more and more entrenched in that
6. but the only thing I want to mention right from the beginning
7. about the kind of path it's actually going in
8. so I thought I better let you know so you can kind of like work out what happened
9. so maybe we can come up we can pull the stops out
10. but I don't want anything to come back to me okay
11. I want to make that clear okay
12. I don't want anything coming back to me anything
13. but again I don't want anything coming back to me
14. I want to make that absolutely clear okay
15. I won't be you know I won't be able to deal with this situation any more okay
16. alright okay there's going to be a situation
17. where the girl is going to go
18. and do a recce on a premises
19. the week before we're going to go out
20. and do the job

21. she's going to go out
22. and do the recce
23. and have a look for security for us okay
24. when what's going to happen after that
25. we're going to go and meet round er young lads place
26. and we're going to over what she's seen
27. the tall fella he's going to go
28. and he's going to pull a hire car
29. and we're going to get the hire car
30. and utilise that on the job
31. we've all been tasked to go and get balaclavas
32. to hide our identity okay
33. we've all been given a task
34. the girl's doing the reconnaissance
35. tall man's going to get the hire car
36. and the young lad he's going to go and get the spray paint okay
37. I've been tasked to get the bolt croppers okay
38. what we're going to do then
39. once we've done once we've done the reconnaissance you know
40. once we've had a meeting on the Wednesday
41. what we're going to do is
42. we're going to meet up
43. I've got to drive down
44. and put my car in the wooded area near the near the warehouse
45. and from what I look at it on the plan it's to the right hand side of the road
46. to change into the other
47. what we're going to do is
48. go and meet up in the pub
49. I think it's called the chimney close or something like that
50. we're going to meet up in the pub car park
51. and then what we're going to do
52. we're going to meet up in the pub car park
53. the tall man's going to drive us to the post
54. and then I'm going to use the bolt croppers to get in
55. and then we're going to spray inside this place

56. all with slogans like political slogans
57. like animal rights and stuff like that anti-vivisection stuff like that okay
58. and then we're going to get back in the motor
59. then we're going to drive off
60. but what we're going to try and do
61. ditch the motor
62. put our kit in it
63. fry our kit
64. then we're going to jump in my motor
65. then we're going to make off
66. the girl is going to be the lookout the whole time okay
67. but I want you to know like I say you know
68. I've had to tell you this
69. because I'm in a very delicate situation okay
70. so I'm letting you know what the score is
71. but again I can't have anything coming back to me
72. otherwise it's not going to work
73. do you understand

### **Narrative 3**

#### **Free narrative response:**

Yep so as you probably know I sat in a meeting with three others erm I say meeting but it was quite chaotic really erm they clearly have a a common goal in that they want to do something against the warehouse erm but it struck me that they haven't really decided what that thing was erm what their long term aim was erm how they're going to do it and obviously there's three very different characters aside from me I believe there is an overarching aim is to cause some kind of damage or to attach some sort of slogan to the building they didn't really think about how they were going to do that or where they were going to do it erm I kind of prompted them a little bit to say well you know if you're going to do this it has to be somewhere where people can see it they kind of all agreed that on the side of the building was best to write a slogan erm one of the people was very keen on it being fire related in some way they wanted to burn that slogan on to the building erm again with no real thought of well you know that my burn the building down that might endanger their own lives it may endanger the lives of the animals that may or may not be in there but he was adamant he was going to he was going to burn things erm what they ultimately concluded was that some kind of stencilled statement they would unveil on the side of of the building I then sort of led them into the question of well you know and then what what's your aim

get in get out erm also if you're going to do it it's got to be at a time that people can see it and butt onto that that you need to be getting in at a time when people aren't there so what they decided is that we would convene together at erm I think it's called the chimney away from the site all go in together at night over the fence and if need be damage the fence to get in and then attach the slogan to the side of the building at that point I said well okay and then what are we leaving are we staying perhaps we should try and disrupt their business a little bit so they then decided that perhaps chain ourselves to to the building or in some way erm to disrupt the business itself really no real more concrete plans around that I think they decided that we'd meet at night time don't remember the time if time was eventually discussed it was that chaotic and then chain themselves to the building I was given the job of bringing the chains so I kind of got control over access once whatever is done is done erm one of the other chaps is going to bring the spray cans and I think one of the others is going to bring some food but it was really not clear that anyone was really leading them in what they were doing erm I'm not confident enough that they they know what they're doing to say that I don't think they'll change their plans I think they'll turn up and they'll be quite spontaneous and events will make them change what they do because they are that that badly led and badly sort of organised

#### Clause Analysis

1. Yep so as you probably know
2. I sat in a meeting
3. with three others
4. I say meeting but it was quite chaotic really
5. they clearly have a a common goal
6. in that they want to do something against the warehouse
7. but it struck me that they haven't really decided what that thing was
8. what their long term aim was
9. how they're going to do it
10. and obviously there's three very different characters aside from me
11. I believe there is an overarching aim
12. is to is to cause some kind of damage
13. or to attach some sort of slogan to the building
14. they didn't really think about how they were going to do that or where they were going to do it
15. I kind of prompted them a little bit
16. to say well you know if you're going to do this it has to be somewhere where people can see it
17. they kind of all agreed that on the side of the building was best to write a slogan
18. one of the people was very keen on it being fire related in some way
19. they wanted to burn that slogan on to the building

20. again with no real thought of
21. well you know that may burn the building down
22. that might endanger their own lives
23. it may endanger the lives of the animals that may or may not be in there
24. but he was adamant he was going to
25. he was going to burn things
26. what they ultimately concluded was that some kind of stencilled statement
27. they would unveil on the side of of the building
28. I then sort of led them into the question of well you know
29. and then what what's your aim
30. get in get out
31. also if you're going to do it it's got to be at a time that people can see it
32. and butt onto that that you need to be getting in at a time when people aren't there
33. so what they decided is that
34. we would convene together
35. at erm I think it's called the chimney away from the site
36. all go in together at night over the fence
37. and if need be damage the fence to get in
38. and then attach the slogan to the side of the building
39. at that point I said well okay and then what
40. are we leaving are we staying
41. perhaps we should try and disrupt their business a little bit
42. so they then decided that perhaps chain ourselves to to the building
43. or in some way erm to disrupt the business itself really
44. no real more concrete plans around that
45. I think they decided that we'd meet at night time
46. don't remember the time if time was eventually discussed
47. it was that chaotic
48. and then chain themselves to the building
49. I was given the job of bringing the chains
50. so I kind of got control over access once whatever is done is done
51. one of the other chaps is going to bring the spray cans
52. and I think one of the others is going to bring some food
53. but it was really not clear that anyone was really leading them in what they were doing
54. I'm not confident enough that they they know what they're doing

55. to say that I don't think they'll change their plans
56. I think they'll turn up and they'll be quite spontaneous
57. and events will make them change what they do
58. because they are that that badly led
59. and badly sort of organised

#### **Narrative 4**

##### **Free narrative response:**

Discounted as the participant did not understand the instructions.

#### **Narrative 5**

##### **Free narrative response:**

Well erm we agreed that I would be the driver I would pick everyone up and we would get to Manor Road by twelve thirty erm Laura would go out and do a recce check that it's all okay the other two was going to get the stuff out of the boot and then we'd all get out and do the graffiti on the wall we'd cut the fence and get in that way and basically that's it

##### **Clause Analysis**

1. Well erm we agreed that
2. I would be the driver
3. I would pick everyone up
4. and we would get to Manor Road by twelve thirty
5. Laura would go out
6. and do a recce
7. check that it's all okay
8. the other two was going to get the stuff out of the boot
9. and then we'd all get out
10. and do the graffiti on the wall
11. we'd cut the fence
12. and get in that way
13. and basically that's it

#### **Narrative 6**

##### **Free narrative response:**

Right okay alright well erm so everybody was in agreement that we wanted to go onto these premises and cause some disruption erm but the level of disruption that was going to be caused was a bit

in debate erm so there were three different things really that got mentioned one was that we dig a tunnel from outside the fence erm into the premises erm but everybody else seemed to think that was a bit that was a lot of work and probably wouldn't be able to do it erm the the next thing was cut the fence cut the fence erm one person sort of distract the people inside so that everybody else could pile in and then when we got in there erm either we were going to disrupt by writing a load of slogans and stuff on the walls about the fact that we disagreed with what was being done and the other thing was erm to set fire to it erm and although there was a lot of discussion about that there didn't my impression was that we didn't really reach a conclusion about which of those things we were going to do other than the idea of the cutting of the fence and the distracting of maybe a member of staff was probably the way that it would go

### **Clause Analysis**

1. Right okay alright well so everybody was in agreement that
2. we wanted to go onto these premises
3. and cause some disruption
4. but the level of disruption that was going to be caused was a bit in debate
5. so there were three different things really that got mentioned
6. one was that we dig a tunnel from outside the fence into the premises
7. but everybody else seemed to think that was a bit that was a lot of work
8. and probably wouldn't be able to do it
9. the next thing was cut the fence
10. cut the fence
11. one person sort of distract the people inside
12. so that everybody else could pile in
13. and then when we got in there
14. either we were going to disrupt by writing a load of slogans and stuff on the walls
15. about the fact that we disagreed with what was being done
16. and the other thing was to set fire to it
17. and although there was a lot of discussion about that there didn't my impression was that we didn't really reach a conclusion
18. about which of those things we were going to do
19. other than the idea of the cutting of the fence
20. and the distracting of maybe a member of staff
21. was probably the way that it would go

### **Narrative 7**

### Free narrative response:

Right erm one of the main concerns from various people was erm what the security was on the on the site and the opinion seemed to be that there wasn't a physical presence like a night watchman or anything there was just an alarm but they seemed to think that the alarm wouldn't go off unless anyone tried to break into the building and the plan isn't to break into the building the plan is just to put banners on the outside of the building so they seemed to think they probably the alarm as such wouldn't be a problem erm as far as consent is concerned the plan was to get erm a v-ladder you call it that goes up and then down on the other side and they reckon that would go over the over the fence erm the plan is to use a van approaching from the station end of was it manor road I think erm and to park it opposite the bungalow backed into the bushes so that when they open the back doors er any unloading or people getting out or anything hopefully would be hidden by the bushes erm if er there was they didn't seem to the plan is to probably to carry it out at four o'clock one morning when hopefully you know the station will be closed and nobody will be coming up and down that road but if they were to be disturbed erm hopefully no no violence because it's not intended to be a violent protest in any way erm and worst case scenario they might have to make a run for it and arrange to re-group somewhere else erm it appears to me in the discussion that slim would be leader he seems to have the most sort of er input erm what else erm oh yeah the plan is that if we can get the banners up glued on to the side of the building er at night then the plan is if that goes well to then return with the press the next morning er to get obviously publicity for the cause erm I can't think of anything else oh we discussed things like erm what to wear you know dark clothing and things over our faces and all that sort of thing erm that's about it I think really I don't know if I've forgotten anything erm no I don't' think so I think that's more or less it

### Clause Analysis

1. Right erm one of the main concerns from various people
2. was erm what the security was on the on the site
3. and the opinion seemed to be that there wasn't a physical presence
4. like a night watchman or anything
5. there was just an alarm
6. but they seemed to think that the alarm wouldn't go off
7. unless anyone tried to break into the building
8. and the plan isn't to break into the building
9. the plan is
10. just to put banners on the outside of the building
11. so they seemed to think they probably the alarm as such wouldn't be a problem as far as consent is concerned
12. the plan was to get erm a v-ladder you call it that goes up and then down on the other side

13. and they reckon that would go over the over the fence
14. the plan is to use a van approaching from the station end of was it manor road I think
15. and to park it opposite the bungalow
16. backed into the bushes
17. so that when they open the back doors
18. any unloading or people getting out or anything hopefully would be hidden by the bushes
19. if er there was they didn't seem to the plan is
20. to probably to carry it out at four o'clock one morning
21. when hopefully you know the station will be closed
22. and nobody will be coming up and down that road
23. but if they were to be disturbed erm hopefully no no violence
24. because it's not intended to be a violent protest in any way
25. and worst case scenario they might have to make a run for it
26. and arrange to re-group somewhere else
27. it appears to me in the discussion
28. that slim would be leader
29. he seems to have the most sort of er input
30. what else oh yeah the plan is that
31. if we can get the banners up
32. glued on to the side of the building at night
33. then the plan is if that goes well
34. to then return with the press the next morning
35. to get obviously publicity for the cause
36. I can't think of anything else
37. oh we discussed things like erm what to wear
38. you know dark clothing
39. and things over our faces
40. and all that sort of thing
41. that's about it I think
42. really I don't know if I've forgotten anything
43. no I don't think so
44. I think that's more or less it

### **Narrative 8**

**Free narrative response:**

Right okay well we basically we had a meeting there was four of us there erm started off with a bit of a discussion about what the plan was there seemed to be a bit of confusion about what was actually in the premises because two of the two of the people in the party thought there were animals inside and then the idea was to get in to help the animals escape because we knew of the company in question was someone who a company which did experiments on animals which we erm you know the group didn't approve of so there was confusion initially as to whether the warehouse as it was referred to was just a warehouse for storing stuff or whether it had animals the consensus after a while was it was just a warehouse with no animals in it so there was no need to actually get into the warehouse because two of the party thought we actually had to get into the warehouse to get the animals out but then we decided that probably wasn't what was required so the way we headed off then was that the idea was to get maximum media publicity to get the public make them aware what this company was involved with and to hopefully get them to change their ways the type of publicity which we thought we could get or achieve was by getting into the premises and probably using spray cans and just graffiti-ing all over the outside the basically the outside so the public can see it erm one of the gang thought put banners up I assume banners would be prepared in advance but basically to adorn the outside with graffiti and banners and then to get in touch with the press with the media to make them aware what we believe what the gang believed in and to erm hopefully get in the papers we agreed to meet in a pub there was a pub nearby just over the road I believe out there's a bit of confusion in my mind whether it was quarter to seven or seven o'clock but early evening meet in this pub wearing dark clothing erm and we were going to have a van with all the stuff in one of the gang was going to get some sturdy wire cutters because under the cover of darkness we were aware that there were security cameras but thought they didn't go cover the entire premises so that we could probably possibly avoid them but if we couldn't avoid them we could be quick enough in do the stuff and get out so the way we would get in is the impression I got would be to cut the wire it was only a chain link fence with you couldn't easily go over it because there was like barbed wire on the top but you could easily cut a hole in the fence get through do what we wanted to do graffiti banners and get out and then when we were out then we could get in touch with the media and make them aware of what had happened so this is all going to happen on Friday night there was some initial discussion about getting a van which would be in the same colours or painted to look like one of their vans but it wasn't obvious what benefit that would give us because we just wanted something to transport the stuff we could park nearby go in you know do the deed and get out erm so there were four of us in the gang it's going to happen Friday night as I say it would be a non-violent protest there'd be no part of what I was trying to find out in my conversations were whether they planned to have any weapons and they were definitely against weapons they just wanted to go in silent protest say what they believed in and get the press involved erm that's probably all I can report really so yes I mean the conversation went

on for half an hour that is what we sort of agreed between ourselves it'd be a erm non-violent protest get maximum media publicity

### Clause Analysis

1. Right okay well we basically we had a meeting
2. there was four of us
3. there erm started off with a bit of a discussion about what the plan was
4. there seemed to be a bit of confusion about what was actually in the premises
5. because two of the two of the people in the party thought there were animals inside
6. and then the idea was to get in to help the animals escape
7. because we knew of the company in question was someone who a company which did experiments on animals
8. which we erm you know the group didn't approve of
9. so there was confusion initially
10. as to whether the warehouse as it was referred to was just a warehouse for storing stuff
11. or whether it had animals
12. the consensus after a while was it was just a warehouse with no animals in it
13. so there was no need to actually get into the warehouse
14. because two of the party thought we actually had to get into the warehouse
15. to get the animals out
16. but then we decided that probably wasn't what was required
17. so the way we headed off then was that
18. the idea was to get maximum media publicity
19. to get the public make them aware what this company was involved with
20. and to hopefully get them to change their ways
21. the type of publicity which we thought we could get or achieve
22. was by getting into the premises
23. and probably using spray cans
24. and just graffiti-ing all over the outside
25. the basically the outside so the public can see it
26. one of the gang thought put banners up
27. I assume banners would be prepared in advance
28. but basically to adorn the outside with graffiti and banners
29. and then to get in touch with the press with the media
30. to make them aware what we believe what the gang believed in
31. and to erm hopefully get in the papers

32. we agreed to meet in a pub
33. there was a pub nearby just over the road
34. I believe but there's a bit of confusion in my mind whether it was quarter to seven or seven o'clock
35. but early evening meet in this pub
36. wearing dark clothing
37. and we were going to have a van with all the stuff in
38. one of the gang was going to get some sturdy wire cutters
39. because under the cover of darkness we were aware that there were security cameras
40. but thought they didn't go cover the entire premises
41. so that we could probably possibly avoid them
42. but if we couldn't avoid them we could be quick enough
43. in do the stuff and get out
44. so the way we would get in is
45. the impression I got
46. would be to cut the wire
47. it was only a chain link fence with you couldn't easily go over it
48. because there was like barbed wire on the top
49. but you could easily cut a hole in the fence
50. get through
51. do what we wanted to do
52. graffiti banners
53. and get out
54. and then when we were out
55. then we could get in touch with the media
56. and make them aware of what had happened
57. so this is all going to happen on Friday night
58. there was some initial discussion about getting a van
59. which would be in the same colours or painted to look like one of their vans
60. but it wasn't obvious what benefit that would give us
61. because we just wanted something to transport the stuff
62. we could park nearby
63. go in you know
64. do the deed
65. and get out

66. so there were four of us in the gang
67. it's going to happen Friday night
68. as I say it would be a non-violent protest
69. there'd be no part of what I was trying to find out in my conversations were whether they planned to have any weapons
70. and they were definitely against weapons
71. they just wanted to go in silent protest
72. say what they believed in
73. and get the press involved
74. that's probably all I can report really
75. so yes I mean the conversation went on for half an hour
76. that is what we sort of agreed between ourselves
77. it'd be a erm non-violent protest
78. get maximum media publicity

### Narrative 9

#### **Free narrative response:**

Okay erm what happened in the meeting with this I don't trust some of the issues that they had planned and prepared their belief is to get into the warehouse I got their belief and told us that we were planning with them I was with them when they were planning to wear to wear er hoodies but dark hoodies and erm they were planning to park the car just outside the warehouse park at the warehouse and then walk to the warehouse at the side of the fence get into the warehouse from the fence side and then from the back back of the fence get to the front and graffiti the whole place and then erm that would be all the plan was meant to be shopping was meant to be it was meant to be on er Saturday afternoon that's when they are doing the shopping er not evening Saturday evening around roughly erm after I guess everyone's plans in the evening and then we have Sunday and then a week before everything is carried out the plan is to buy all the stuff from the shop which is like an art shop that is where they are buying all their equipment from they're planning to er get into the place at midnight that's when they're planning to get to the place the warehouse shopping in the evening Saturday they have also planned everything them going to the shop and then what happens

#### **Clause Analysis**

1. Okay erm what happened in the meeting with this
2. I don't trust some of the issues that they had planned and prepared
3. their belief is to get into the warehouse
4. I got their belief

5. and told us that we we were planning with them
6. I was with them when
7. they were planning to wear er hoodies but dark hoodies
8. and erm they were planning to
9. park the car just outside the warehouse
10. park at the warehouse
11. and then walk to the warehouse
12. at the side of the fence get into the warehouse from the fence side
13. and then from the back back of the fence get to the front
14. and graffiti the whole place
15. and then erm that would be all
16. the plan was meant to be shopping
17. was meant to be it was meant to be on er Saturday afternoon that's when they are doing the shopping not evening Saturday evening around roughly erm after
18. I guess everyone's plans in the evening
19. and then we have Sunday
20. and then a week before everything is carried out
21. the plan is to buy all the stuff from the shop
22. which is like an art shop
23. that is where they are buying all their equipment from
24. they're planning to er get into the place at midnight
25. that's when they're planning to get to the place the warehouse
26. shopping in the evening Saturday
27. they have also planned everything
28. them going to the shop
29. and then what happens

### **Narrative 10**

#### **Free narrative response:**

Okay I went to the meeting with three others at this meeting we discussed erm some plans to erm it was like an action plan towards a premises where they do animal testing erm the property is a large warehouse erm quite secluded surrounded by other businesses erm there's one road leading to it erm and at this meeting erm the plans were discussed

#### **Clause Analysis**

1. Okay I went to the meeting

2. with three others at this meeting
3. we discussed erm some plans
4. to erm it was like an action plan
5. towards a premises where they do animal testing
6. the property is a large warehouse quite secluded
7. surrounded by other businesses
8. there's one road leading to it
9. and at this meeting
10. the plans were discussed

### Narrative 11

#### **Free narrative response:**

Yeah so I went to the meeting today erm at a place called CS where I met three activists one's called Dave and I can't remember the names of the other two but one's female with a pink shirt and there was this little fellow I think his name might have been Dan Dan was his name yeah anyway what they wanted to do today was to organise a erm like a protest down at one of these animal sort of places where they do experiments or kill animals or something like that didn't really get to the bottom of what the place was but there's a warehouse erm off the manor road off close to Kempston something Kepston so erm the main the main organiser was the fellow that was called Dave a white bloke really old and fat no erm not really old he's probably about forty bit chubby er wearing blue shirt so he kind of took er took hold of the proceedings and started dishing out erm basically dishing out tasks erm and everybody else seemed to just like listen to what he had to say they erm they seemed he was in charge and they seemed to know he was in charge er they went all round the houses to be fair until they came to and what I'm going to tell you now is their actual plan so their actual plan is is for Dan to get two cars er which are going to be hired er they wanted four of us to travel to kiln road which is just around the corner form this warehouse which was going to be our rendezvous point with us we would have erm a camera some paint black overalls and masks the paint erm was meant to be supplied we was all meant to go and get our own paint we was all meant to go and get our own overalls because there was an issue with size Dan volunteered to get the masks erm I'm taking my time because I want to get this right so er we were meant to rendezvous that's my own word we was meant to rendezvous at kiln road for three am er the idea is and we was to have some bolt cutters er the bolt cutters were going to be supplied by the girl erm the idea she was also erm considered I'm going to use my own phrase the kind of head of security she was the person that was meant to go to the premises beforehand do a recce on those premises to see if there's any cameras or security dogs whatever might be down there erm so the idea was is that they were then going to go to the barrier or the fencing around the er factory or warehouse whatever it was and if they

needed to they was going to cut the fence go in graffiti the walls and the camera was to take some pictures of the graffiti although I've got to be honest later on it was decided there was going to be no no photographs erm and there was a discussion as to whether erm a erm reporter should be invited along for publicity but er it was decided it wasn't going to happen this time and that was about the strength of that do you need to know how we actually got to those how they actually they actually got to those decisions what I might do then is I might just tell you anyway so er Dave was barking out his orders erm he told me to get the paint and me to daub the walls with the graffiti erm the long and short of it is I refused to do that why did I refuse well as you know I am an undercover police officer so I can't I can't agree to this conspiracy and I certainly can't act as agent provocateur so what I did say is right out in front of everybody that I weren't going to do it why should I be doing that they want me to buy all the paint even if I was just a normal member of the bloody public they want me to buy all the paint me to go over the fence and me to do the graffiti that isn't going to happen in a million years not a problem for me to say I'm not doing that I said if you want the paint go buy your own paint so erm they agreed to buy their own paint erm they wanted me to take the camera to take photographs of the graffiti erm I was kind of thinking of doing that at one point because I thought it might be good evidence you know if at some point I might find myself in court giving evidence about this then if they want me to take photographs of it great I'll do it then they er they er changed their minds about that they then started talking about this reporter that I mentioned to you earlier and then they bottled that as well they decided they didn't want a reporter either for some reason anyway so erm I made sure I didn't actually agree to anything what the way it went is if they I said when I was trying to find out what was actually what their final plans were because they did go round the houses and to be honest I really didn't know what their final plan was because so many little erm ideas have been put into the pot there was no definitive plan at the end so I said so what is it we're supposed to be doing then and then erm between them they came down to this what was this definitive plan which is what I just told you so it's hire cars for Dan he gets the masks erm everybody gets a pot of paint everybody that's going I've not agreed to go yet they didn't ask me if I was definitely going erm paint the erm the bolt cutters er the ladies supplying and Dave I could not pin him down to what he's actually doing other than he was organising it so it looks to me what they've agreed to do between them is to commit criminal damage and maybe criminal trespass that's about it

#### **Clause Analysis**

1. Yeah so I went to the meeting today at a place called CS
2. where I met three activists
3. one's called Dave and I can't remember the names of the other two
4. but one's female with a pink shirt
5. and there was this little fellow

6. I think his name might have been Dan
7. Dan was his name
8. yeah anyway what they wanted to do today was to organise a erm like a protest
9. down at one of these animal sort of places
10. where they do experiments or kill animals or something like that
11. didn't really get to the bottom of what the place was
12. but there's a warehouse off the manor road off
13. close to Kempston something Kepston
14. so erm the main the main organiser was the fellow that was called Dave
15. a white bloke really old and fat no erm not really old he's probably about forty bit chubby  
wearing blue shirt
16. so he kind of took er took hold of the proceedings
17. and started dishing out erm basically dishing out tasks
18. and everybody else seemed to just like listen to what he had to say
19. they erm they seemed he was in charge and they seemed to know he was in charge
20. they went all round the houses to be fair
21. until they came to
22. and what I'm going to tell you now is their actual plan
23. so their actual plan is
24. is for Dan to get two cars
25. which are going to be hired
26. they wanted four of us to travel to kiln road
27. which is just around the corner form this warehouse
28. which was going to be our rendezvous point with us
29. we would have erm a camera some paint black overalls and masks
30. the paint erm was meant to be supplied
31. we was all meant to go and get our own paint
32. we was all meant to go and get our own overalls
33. because there was an issue with size
34. Dan volunteered to get the masks
35. I'm taking my time because I want to get this right
36. so er we were meant to rendezvous
37. that's my own word
38. we was meant to rendezvous at kiln road for three am
39. the idea is and we was to have some bolt cutters

40. the bolt cutters were going to be supplied by the girl
41. the idea she was also erm considered
42. I'm going to use my own phrase
43. the kind of head of security
44. she was the person that was meant to go to the premises beforehand
45. do a recce on those premises
46. to see if there's any cameras or security dogs
47. whatever might be down there
48. so the idea was is that
49. they were then going to go to the barrier or the fencing around the er factory or warehouse  
whatever it was
50. and if they needed to they was going to cut the fence
51. go in
52. graffiti the walls
53. and the camera was to take some pictures of the graffiti
54. although I've got to be honest later on it was decided there was going to be no no photographs
55. and there was a discussion as to whether erm a erm reporter should be invited along for  
publicity
56. but er it was decided it wasn't going to happen this time
57. and that was about the strength of that
58. do you need to know how we actually got to those how they actually they actually got to those  
decisions
59. what I might do then is
60. I might just tell you anyway
61. so er Dave was barking out his orders
62. he told me to get the paint
63. and me to daub the walls with the graffiti
64. the long and short of it is I refused to do that
65. why did I refuse
66. well as you know I am an undercover police officer
67. so I can't I can't agree to this conspiracy
68. and I certainly can't act as agent provocateur
69. so what I did say is
70. right out in front of everybody
71. that I weren't going to do it

72. why should I be doing that
73. they want me to buy all the paint
74. even if I was just a normal member of the bloody public
75. they want me to buy all the paint
76. me to go over the fence
77. and me to do the graffiti
78. that isn't going to happen in a million years
79. not a problem for me to say I'm not doing that
80. I said if you want the paint go buy your own paint
81. so erm they agreed to buy their own paint
82. they wanted me to take the camera
83. to take photographs of the graffiti
84. I was kind of thinking of doing that at one point
85. because I thought it might be good evidence
86. you know if at some point I might find myself in court giving evidence about this
87. then if they want me to take photographs of it great
88. I'll do it then
89. they er they er changed their minds about that
90. they then started talking about this reporter that I mentioned to you earlier
91. and then they bottled that as well
92. they decided they didn't want a reporter either for some reason
93. anyway so erm I made sure I didn't actually agree to anything
94. what what the way it went is if they I said when I was trying to find out what was actually what  
their final plans were
95. because they did go round the houses
96. and to be honest I really didn't know what their final plan was
97. because so many little erm ideas have been put into the pot
98. there was no definitive plan at the end
99. so I said so what is it we're supposed to be doing then
100. and then erm between them they came down to this
101. what was this definitive plan which is what I just told you
102. so it's hire cars for Dan
103. he gets the masks
104. everybody gets a pot of paint
105. everybody that's going

106. I've not agreed to go yet  
107. they didn't ask me if I was definitely going  
108. paint the erm  
109. the bolt cutters er the ladies supplying  
110. and Dave I could not pin him down to what he's actually doing  
111. other than he was organising it  
112. so it looks to me what they've agreed to do between them is to commit criminal  
damage  
113. and maybe criminal trespass  
114. that's about it

### **Narrative 12**

#### **Free narrative response:**

Ok so erm the meeting was brought together to discuss erm an attack on the erm on the animal rights erm building that's in the photograph here erm erm I think they've probably been quite good at maybe covering some of their tracks and maybe what their real intention is so what you might what we all probably thought was maybe like domestic extremism that type of activity how like that's not that's not what they're about they're using that as a front really to sort of keep us off off what they're really up to erm and I fear that there's probably going to be quite a significant attack on that building erm and I don't think that it's about the animals I just think they're using that as a front really erm and erm there was the three in the meeting erm the main one really erm C who who obviously we've talked about before was was really the one that wanted to get into the details so sort of how and when and where if I'm honest I think there wasn't that much planning in it I think I would have expected to have seen a little more detail a little bit more fore thought into it you know because of its location and it's quite isolated I mean next to erm a row of buildings I think when we when they started talking about erm doing the attack on a Sunday evening at quarter to seven I'm thinking do you know what there's going to be no traffic down that or in and around that area you've got a car auction site when really you could be picking your attack at a at a different time when you've then to be more got a little bit more traffic around there probably a higher impact and you're going to be erm not seen really you're going to be less visible but erm the idea was erm C more so and erm and C was going in on the fencing they see that as sort of quite a weak erm fence using bolt croppers and then going in sort of through the front door erm and spraying graffiti that's what they're going to say but the truth is they're going to take take erm explosives in there they don't care about the animals to be fair although I so erm

yeah but I just my my worry is that you know whilst we can keep having these meetings with them and I can keep doing what I'm doing I just think we need to be really cautious of the fact that they're quite hot headed and quite impulsive and they're not really giving it there's not much detail behind it I think yeah

### Clause Analysis

1. Ok so erm the meeting was brought together
2. to discuss erm an attack on the erm on the animal rights erm building that's in the photograph here
3. I think they've probably been quite good
4. at maybe covering some of their tracks
5. and maybe what their real intention is
6. so what you might what we all probably thought was maybe like domestic extremism
7. that type of activity how like that's not that's not what they're about
8. they're using that as a front really
9. to sort of keep us off off what they're really up to
10. and I fear that there's probably going to be quite a significant attack on that building
11. and I don't think that it's about the animals
12. I just think they're using that as a front really
13. and erm there was the three in the meeting
14. the main one really erm C who who obviously we've talked about before
15. was really the one that wanted to get into the details so sort of how and when and where if I'm honest
16. I think there wasn't that much planning in it
17. I think I would have expected to have seen a little more detail a little bit more fore thought into it you know
18. because of its location and it's quite isolated I mean next to erm a row of buildings
19. I think when we
20. when they started talking about erm doing the attack on a Sunday evening at quarter to seven
21. I'm thinking do you know what there's going to be no traffic down that or in and around that area
22. you've got a car auction site
23. when really you could be picking your attack at a at a different time
24. when you've then to be more got a little bit more traffic around
25. there probably a higher impact
26. and you're going to be erm not seen really

27. you're going to be less visible
28. but erm the idea was erm C more so and erm and C was going in on the fencing
29. they see that as sort of quite a weak erm fence
30. using bolt croppers
31. and then going in sort of through the front door
32. and spraying graffiti
33. that's what they're going to say
34. but the truth is they're going to take take erm explosives in there
35. they don't care about the animals to be fair
36. although I so erm yeah but I just my my worry is that you know whilst we can keep having these meetings with them
37. and I can keep doing what I'm doing
38. I just think we need to be really cautious
39. of the fact that they're quite hot headed
40. and quite impulsive
41. and they're not really giving it
42. there's not much detail behind it
43. I think yeah

### Narrative 13

#### **Free narrative response:**

erm there was this terrorist they were planning this terrorist attack erm that's due to take place on Sunday we had a meeting about it erm at one of their houses but that was it really they're just planning an attack

#### **Clause Analysis**

1. there was this terrorist
2. they were planning this terrorist attack
3. that's due to take place on Sunday
4. we had a meeting about it erm at one of their houses
5. but that was it really
6. they're just planning an attack

### Narrative 14

#### **Free narrative response:**

Okay erm well well we had a meeting about stuff you know they want to do and things like

that erm and basically they've come up with a plan of what they what they're after doing erm it's a bit worse than I thought erm you know how much do you want to you want to know everything about okay erm they're going to attack the warehouse erm and they're going to kill anyone in sight so yeah that that that's what they're going to do and erm I'm going to be with them so they're going to want me to get involved in it but I don't know how much more I can tell you really because it's going to they can't know where it's come from so yeah but yeah erm they've got guns to do it and it's going to be soon we've talked about dates but it's going to be it's going to be soon I think we we still don't know whether to trust each other so I think it'll be a last minute thing and it'll be we're going to go that's what I've got

### **Clause Analysis**

1. Okay erm well well we had a meeting about stuff you know they want to do and things like that
2. and basically they've come up with a plan of what they what they're after doing
3. it's a bit worse than I thought
4. you know how much do you want to you want to know everything about
5. okay erm they're going to attack the warehouse
6. and they're going to kill anyone in sight
7. so yeah that that that's what they're going to do
8. and erm I'm going to be with them
9. so they're going to want me to get involved in it
10. but I don't know how much more I can tell you really
11. because it's going to they can't know where it's come from
12. they've got guns to do it
13. and it's going to be soon
14. we've talked about dates
15. but it's going to be it's going to be soon
16. I think we we still don't know whether to trust each other
17. so I think it'll be a last minute thing
18. and it'll be we're going to go
19. that's what I've got

### **Narrative 15**

#### **Free narrative response:**

Well we discussed what's going on who's doing what and going where really erm what it's all about it's about pharmaceuticals raid on a warehouse in the middle of nowhere as far as I

can see so we were just discussing who was going where who's under cover and who was outside

### Clause Analysis

1. Well we discussed what's going on
2. who's doing what
3. and going where really
4. what it's all about
5. it's about pharmaceuticals raid on a warehouse in the middle of nowhere
6. as far as I can see
7. so we were just discussing
8. who was going where
9. who's under cover
10. and who was outside

### Narrative 16

#### Free narrative response:

Okay erm well we a few of us met four of us all together and erm we talked about what day we could erm get into the animal activist place and I think they are they're very keen that they're going to like blow the place up it seems that erm they are going to try and get the obviously all the animals out first and this is going to happen on a erm Saturday and they're we're just confirming which Saturday is what they were doing erm about half twelve at night Jill's going to pick everybody up erm we're going to drive down the erm Manor Road and park up and then go to the wooded bit with erm the goods that are in the boot and cut through which they understand is fencing here to get through to the main warehouse bit where the animals are and safely get the animals out and then basically blow the place up

### Clause Analysis

1. Okay erm well we a few of us met four of us all together
2. and erm we talked about what day we could erm get into the animal activist place
3. and I think they are they're very keen
4. that they're going to like blow the place up
5. it seems that erm they are going to try and get the obviously all the animals out first
6. and this is going to happen on a erm Saturday
7. and they're we're just confirming which Saturday
8. is what they were doing
9. about half twelve at night Jill's going to pick everybody up

10. we're going to drive down the erm Manor Road
11. and park up
12. and then go to the wooded bit
13. with erm the goods that are in the boot
14. and cut through which they understand is fencing here
15. to get through to the main warehouse bit where the animals are
16. and safely get the animals out
17. and then basically blow the place up

### **Narrative 17**

#### **Free narrative response:**

Okay well erm yeah we were discussing basically er different routes on how we could actually get in to the warehouse er so we looked at the plans on the sheets that were supplied obviously and we were looking at access routes to get in there distractions erm and possible routes to get in as a group erm you know to to get ourselves into the building and to obviously uncover what was going on in there

#### **Clause Analysis**

1. Okay well erm yeah we were discussing basically er different routes
2. on how we could actually get in to the warehouse
3. so we looked at the plans on the sheets that were supplied obviously
4. and we were looking at access routes to get in there
5. distractions erm and possible routes to get in as a group
6. you know to to get ourselves into the building
7. and to obviously uncover what was going on in there

### **Narrative 18**

#### **Free narrative response:**

Okay in my group there were four individuals including myself er there was a guy called Slim, somebody called Abigail and somebody called Deborah Debbie erm just taken at face value the leader of the group seemed to be Slim erm who had a very clear idea about what needed to be done and when and how the erm backed up by Abigail who seemed to have a very clear idea of erm what she thought needed to be done to back up what Slim was projecting Deborah said little erm but was clearly I think erm anti-violence and anti- erm doing anything too much untoward and hopefully I kept my role erm as it was outlined to me beforehand which was to be really an undercover erm plant if that's the right word within the

group reporting to somebody from the police afterwards on the outcome erm the discussion really focused on erm some of the logistics what to do erm how to do it and erm roughly when it was decided it should be done at four o'clock in the morning in the dead of night when nobody would be alert er it should the the what was talked about erm was a this is what was talked about I want to emphasise just that was what was talked about what was talked about was a an attack if that's the right word on the warehouse er which was owned by this this pharmaceutical company erm the idea of that was put forward was of billowing posters I guess posters which said animal rights blah blah blah on the external sides of the warehouse and then basically beating a retreat er there was a lot of discussion about er things like er how to get there which was a van erm Abigail was concerned it should take place on a dry night discussion didn't really didn't get down to when precisely when it should happen in terms of dates it was a bit vague on those terms erm but I got the impression that there were just four people involved splitting up into two groups and doing it wire cutters and things like that to get through the the boundary er fence of the warehouse hopefully in the dead of night escape and that that's that er so I think that was pretty much outlined in the discussion by erm I managed to erm ascertain from er listening in to a conversation beforehand between a couple of the people involved that I think the real er intent and objective was rather different from that and I actually think that the leaders of the group Slim in particular er were affiliated not only to the erm animal rights movement but also to er some sort of extreme left wing anarchist movement who want to make a bit of a splash in the sort of unpleasant way and erm wanted in a sense to hide themselves in planning it behind the animal rights movement and er I think their I established if that's the right word from listening in that their erm their plan really focused on the station up the road and that yeah okay sticking gluey posters on the door of the warehouse might well be something that the animal rights people might do but they were actually planning to have back up from the erm anarchist movement for want of a better word who would be parking a vehicle sort of disguised amongst the general vehicles in the British car auction place just down the road and then they go and they would attack the station again four o'clock in the morning dead of night and try to blow it up to smithereens by the use of explosives and things like that so the intent of the erm they would synchronise the attack on the warehouse with the attack on the station then they would all try to escape but they would try to hide behind in the planning of it and in support of it behind the animal activists so that's basically the erm the sort of thread that I've picked up not just from the discussion on the erm in the meeting yesterday but from beforehand as well so I think there's a wider wider plot there and I think that erm something needs to be done about it

## Clause Analysis

1. Okay in my group there were four individuals including myself
2. there was a guy called Slim, somebody called Abigail and somebody called Deborah Debbie
3. just taken at face value the leader of the group seemed to be Slim
4. who had a very clear idea about what needed to be done and when and how the
5. backed up by Abigail
6. who seemed to have a very clear idea of erm what she thought needed to be done
7. to back up what Slim was projecting
8. Deborah said little erm
9. but was clearly I think erm anti-violence and anti- erm doing anything too much untoward
10. and hopefully I kept my role erm as it was outlined to me beforehand
11. which was to be really an undercover erm plant if that's the right word within the group
12. reporting to somebody from the police afterwards on the outcome
13. the discussion really focused on erm some of the logistics
14. what to do erm how to do it and erm roughly when
15. it was decided it should be done at four o'clock in the morning
16. in the dead of night when nobody would be alert
17. it should the the what was talked about erm was a this is what was talked about
18. I want to emphasise just that was what was talked about
19. what was talked about was a an attack if that's the right word
20. on the warehouse er which was owned by this this pharmaceutical company
21. the idea of that was put forward
22. was of billowing posters
23. I guess posters which said animal rights blah blah blah
24. on the external sides of the warehouse
25. and then basically beating a retreat
26. there was a lot of discussion about er things like
27. how to get there
28. which was a van
29. Abigail was concerned it should take place on a dry night
30. discussion didn't really didn't get down to when precisely when it should happen in terms of  
dates
31. it was a bit vague on those terms erm
32. but I got the impression that there were just four people involved
33. splitting up into two groups

34. and doing it
35. wire cutters and things like that to get through the the boundary er fence of the warehouse
36. hopefully in the dead of night
37. escape
38. and that that's that
39. so I think that was pretty much outlined in in the discussion by
40. I managed to erm ascertain
41. from er listening in to a conversation beforehand between a couple of the people involved
42. that I think the real er intent and objective was rather different from that
43. and I actually think that the leaders of the group
44. Slim in particular er were affiliated not only to the erm animal rights movement
45. but also to er some sort of extreme left wing anarchist movement
46. who want to make a bit of a splash
47. in the sort of unpleasant way
48. and erm wanted in a sense to hide themselves
49. in planning it behind the animal rights movement
50. and er I think their
51. I established if that's the right word from listening in
52. that their erm their plan really focused on the station up the road
53. and that yeah okay sticking gluey posters on the door of the warehouse might well be something that the animal rights people might do
54. but they were actually planning to have back up from the erm anarchist movement for want of a better word
55. who would be parking a vehicle
56. sort of disguised amongst the general vehicles in the British car auction place just down the road
57. then they go
58. and they would attack the station
59. again four o'clock in the morning dead of night
60. and try to blow it up to smithereens
61. by the use of explosives and things like that
62. so the intent of the
63. they would synchronise the attack on the warehouse
64. with the attack on the station
65. then they would all try to escape

66. but they would try to hide behind
67. in the planning of it and in support of it behind the animal activists
68. so that's basically the erm the sort of thread that I've picked up
69. not just from the discussion on the erm in the meeting yesterday
70. but from beforehand as well
71. so I think there's a wider wider plot there
72. and I think that erm something needs to be done about it

### Narrative 19

#### **Free narrative response:**

Right erm well it started off me arriving at the meeting a little bit late unfortunately and er everything was was going on and there was three of them having a conversation erm one of them seemed quite er radical I think it was Flight was a bit radical erm and then a couple of others like me unfortunately hadn't sort of digested the brief quite as much as we should have done so we were making comments that somebody else was saying no you can't say that because it wasn't in the brief so erm there was when they started talking about hiring the van erm I was saying well erm where shall we leave it I think erm but erm and then they said how they're going to get in with the van so I know it was near the end of the interview I suggested that I knew somebody with bolt cutters that could cut the wire so that we could leave the van outside and er just go in and paint the things er and then this but half half way through the interview not the interview the role play erm the person who was Flight I remember him more than anybody else because he seemed as though he wanted to take erm weapons and and cause trouble erm and even because I was er I was being the undercover policeman I was trying to sort of stop him but at the same time not stop him too much because I didn't want him to think I was being a bit wet if you know what I mean er so that's why I said about the bolt cutters you know thinking that I was sort of all there and all ready to cause damage a little bit but not cause injury and there was a lot of people a couple of people erm were not aware that there was there was not animals in the er in the er warehouse we were supposed to be rescuing the animals but it was obvious by I can't remember who it was they said that there's no animals there all we're going to do is just daub graffiti all over the walls and draw draw the attention and then once we move away erm they would contact the press er but apart from that that's just about all I remember of it even though it went on half an hour you know it's difficult when you it was obvious that a few people were going fast fast at typing and I'm not so by the time I finished doing my typing erm I sort of looked up and there was about three things I had to read those quick before

and er I don't know whether I made a complete hash of it to be honest but I hope not was that alright

### Clause Analysis

1. Right erm well it started off
2. me arriving at the meeting a little bit late unfortunately
3. and er everything was was going on
4. and there was three of them
5. having a conversation
6. one of them seemed quite er radical
7. I think it was Flight was a bit radical
8. and then a couple of others like me unfortunately hadn't sort of digested the brief quite as much as we should have done
9. so we were making comments
10. that somebody else was saying no you can't say that because it wasn't in the brief
11. so erm there was when they started talking about hiring the van
12. I was saying well erm where shall we leave it
13. I think
14. and then they said how they're going to get in with the van
15. so I know it was near the end of the interview
16. I suggested that
17. I knew somebody with bolt cutters that could cut the wire
18. so that we could leave the van outside
19. and er just go in
20. and paint the things
21. and then this but half half way through the interview not the interview the role play
22. the person who was Flight
23. I remember him more than anybody else
24. because he seemed as though
25. he wanted to take erm weapons
26. and cause trouble
27. and even because I was er I was being the undercover policeman
28. I was trying to sort of stop him
29. but at the same time not stop him too much
30. because I didn't want him to think I was being a bit wet
31. if you know what I mean

32. so that's why I said about the bolt cutters
33. you know thinking that I was sort of all there
34. and all ready to cause damage a little bit
35. but not cause injury
36. and there was a lot of people
37. a couple of people erm were not aware
38. that there was there was not animals in the er in the er warehouse
39. we were supposed to be rescuing the animals
40. but it was obvious by I can't remember who it was
41. they said that there's no animals there
42. all we're going to do is just daub graffiti all over the walls
43. and draw draw the attention
44. and then once we move away
45. they would contact the press
46. but apart from that that's just about all I remember of it
47. even though it went on half an hour
48. you know it's difficult when you
49. it was obvious that a few people were going fast
50. fast at typing
51. and I'm not so by the time I finished doing my typing
52. I sort of looked up and there was about three things
53. I had to read those quick before
54. and er I don't know whether I made a complete hash of it to be honest
55. but I hope not
56. was that alright

### **Narrative 20**

#### **Free narrative response:**

Sure erm basically the group are planning a terrorist attack they have set about most of the motions that they want to put in place we've come up with a a rough time and place of the place they know erm they will be wearing their own completely different clothes erm they'll be in whatever they plan to wear really erm and it will involve using the car auction lot erm which is nearby er so yeah I mean they will be planting a bomb in one of the cars er that they will drive into the car auction place they'll all be there on the day taking roles erm as members of the public going to the auction erm due for about two about I think it was yeah

two weeks' time erm on a Saturday weekend when they it will be a busy busy place

### Clause Analysis

1. basically the group are planning a terrorist attack
2. they have set about most of the motions that they want to put in place
3. we've come up with a rough time and place of the place they know
4. they will be wearing their own completely different clothes
5. they'll be in whatever they plan to wear really
6. and it will involve using the car auction lot
7. which is nearby
8. so yeah I mean they will be planting a bomb in one of the cars
9. that they will drive into the car auction place
10. they'll all be there on the day
11. taking roles erm as members of the public going to the auction
12. due for about two about I think it was yeah two weeks' time
13. on a Saturday weekend when they it will be a busy busy place

### Narrative 21

#### Free narrative response:

Okay yep okay well I went to erm I got involved in that group erm the animal activists erm as as I was meant to and erm gone down to that pharmaceutical place with them and erm they've scoping the place it's got the fencing and it's like a proper warehouse place and erm I thought it was just going to be something like erm a demo or whatever it might be or they were going to break in and spray paint or whatever but they're actually talking about doing some serious stuff to the place erm they're talking about rigging explosions and stuff to blow it up I think that's their purpose erm I don't know why but that's what was said and erm so yeah that's it in a nutshell

### Clause Analysis

1. Okay yep okay well I went to erm I got involved in that group erm the animal activists
2. as I was meant to
3. and erm gone down to that pharmaceutical place with them
4. and erm they've scoping the place
5. it's got the fencing
6. and it's like a proper warehouse place
7. and erm I thought it was just going to be something like erm a demo or whatever it might be
8. or they were going to break in

9. and spray paint or whatever
10. but they're actually talking about doing some serious stuff to the place
11. they're talking about rigging explosions
12. and stuff to blow it up
13. I think that's their purpose
14. I don't know why
15. but that's what was said
16. and erm so yeah that's it in a nutshell

## Narrative 22

### **Free narrative response:**

Okay er well er they're er they're planning a terrorist attack erm and er and er there's four of us that were there erm I didn't take much of a part I just listened to what they were saying but they're going to blow the place up erm Dave took the lead role erm yeah Dave took the lead role and er and yeah he was the main organiser and they're going to talk about getting there in cars and stuff and er yeah it's going to be a big explosion erm what else can I say really er Dan little Dan is going to be the wheels man erm Ray is going to get the explosives and er yeah they're going to break into the place and let it go up

### **Clause Analysis**

1. Okay er well er they're er they're planning a terrorist attack
2. and er there's four of us that were there
3. I didn't take much of a part
4. I just listened to what they were saying
5. but they're going to blow the place up
6. Dave took the lead role erm
7. yeah Dave took the lead role
8. and yeah he was the main organiser
9. and they're going to talk about getting there in cars and stuff
10. and er yeah it's going to be a big explosion
11. what else can I say really
12. Dan little Dan is going to be the wheels man
13. Ray is going to get the explosives
14. and er yeah they're going to break into the place
15. and let it go up

## Appendix L

Submission	
Submission Ref	27876
Status	Approved
Submission Coordinator	Michael Rowe michael.rowe@northumbria.ac.uk
Name	<input type="text" value="lee.moffett"/>  
Email	lee.moffett@northumbria.ac.uk
Faculty	<input type="text" value="Arts, Design and Social Sciences"/> 
Department	<input type="text" value="Social Sciences"/> 
Submitting As	<input type="text" value="PGR - Postgraduate Research student"/> 
Externally Approved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Note: ONLY tick this box if your project has already received full ethical approval from an external organisation</b> <i>Please note you will need to attach all documentation relating to your externally approved project. This must contain confirmation of ethical approval from the external organisation.</i>

## Appendix M

**Human Source Online Experiment**

**Participant Information**

*HOME*

**INFORMATION**

*Step 1: Consent*

*Step 2: Briefing*

*Step 3: Virtual Meeting*

*Step 4: De-Brief*

*Step 5: Questionnaire*

*Step 6: Further Briefing*

*Step 7: Second Meeting*

*Step 8: Further De-Brief*

*Step 9: Questionnaire*

*Step 10: Demographics*

**WASH UP**

In the UK, Police informants are defined in law under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (2000), and are referred to as a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS).

The definition of a CHIS creates a unique situation within law enforcement, whereby the informant - or CHIS - is tasked by their 'handler' to establish or maintain a relationship to covertly gather information about a particular person of interest. Having covertly gathered this information, the CHIS is then de-briefed by their handlers, where they are expected to report back what they have learnt.

Psychologically, this is a demanding process, with the CHIS having to understand and carry out their tasks, manipulate social situations, and recall social information.

If you choose to take part in this research, you will be asked to adopt the role of a CHIS. You will be given tasks to obtain information from a 'person of interest' on two separate occasions. After each interaction with the person of interest you will be de-briefed by your handler and asked to complete a short questionnaire. The person of interest will be an actor who will be fully aware of the research aims and who has volunteered to undertake the role. Your interactions with both the 'person of interest' and your 'handler' will be recorded for later analysis.

Participation is completely voluntary and you can refuse to take part in any aspect of the study at any time. Even after completion, you can ask for your results to be withdrawn from the research at any time up until publication. You do not have to complete any tasks or answer any questions that you are not comfortable with, and you will not be asked to provide any personal or identifying information. Any identifying details that are collected incidentally will be destroyed upon completion of the experiment and any subsequent analysis.

Results from this study will form part of a PhD program of research and any subsequent publication/s arising out of the research.

If you have any questions or would like any further information, please contact the researcher at: [lin.moffatt@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:lin.moffatt@northumbria.ac.uk)

Or my supervisor, Professor Gavin Oxburgh at: [gavin.oxburgh@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:gavin.oxburgh@northumbria.ac.uk)

## Appendix N

**Human Source Online Experiment**

**Participant Consent Form**

*HOME*

*INFORMATION*

***Step 1: Consent***

*Step 2: Briefing*

*TASKING*

*DE-BRIEF*

*QUESTIONNAIRE*

*DEMOGRAPHICS*

**WASH UP**

- I confirm that I have read the attached Participant Information relating to this study and understand that I may ask questions regarding the study, via email, at any time.
- I understand that I have the right to inform the research team that I wish to withdraw from the study at any time prior to publication.
- I understand that I do not have to answer any questions that I am not comfortable with, by leaving them blank.
- I agree to provide information as part of this research on the understanding that the research team will take all reasonable steps to protect my privacy and anonymity.
- I understand that the information obtained during this study will only be used as part of the PhD research and any publications that may arise from it.
- I understand that any complaints regarding this research can be made by email to the Northumbria University ethics committee at [ethicssupport@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:ethicssupport@northumbria.ac.uk).
- I confirm I am over the age of 18 years.
- I agree to take part in this study under the conditions outlined above.

## Appendix O

**Online Experiment**

**Participant Briefing**

This research will use a mock scenario. For the purpose of the mock scenario:

- You are a registered police informant (or Covert Human Intelligence Source [CHIS]) under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, 2000.
- You have previously reported on political extremists and politically motivated criminality, and are considered to be a trusted and cooperative agent.
- You were contacted this morning by your handler, who gave you a new task: They want you to make contact with a political activist. The activist has advertised a virtual meeting on a political philosophy forum, and they want you to join the meeting online. You should engage with the person as best you can, and try to find out more about their political activities, including their ideology, what activities they have done in the past and what they intend to do in the future. You should also try to think about any other information that might be useful to investigators, such as personal or identifying details. You **MUST NOT** inform them that you are a police CHIS.
- Your handler instructed you to contact them as soon as you have completed the task so you can be de-briefed about it. They told you that they will be away, but because the information is important, they have asked for another handler – who you have never met before – to de-brief you online.
- Once you have read and understood these instructions please click on the **VIRTUAL MEETING** (Step 3) link on the left of the page, this will take you to the virtual "rally" where you will find the person of interest.
- Once you have completed the tasking please return to this website and click on the **DE-BRIEF** (Step 4) link, which will take you to the online de-brief with your handler.
- Following the de-brief, please navigate back to the website to complete the remaining steps.

## Appendix P

**Participant De-Brief**

Thank you for taking part in this study. It is important to remember that the role of a CHIS is voluntary and involves considerable risk. Academic research can help to keep both the handler and the CHIS safe.

The aim of this study was to test and compare two alternative models which can be used when de-briefing a CHIS.

All participants were asked to complete the same tasks; after the first task, you will have been interviewed using one of the models, and after the second task you will have been interviewed by the alternative model.

After each de-brief you were asked a series of questions to identify your levels of motivation, the amount of rapport you had with the interviewer and how cooperative you were likely to be in the future. All of these have been shown to be important considerations for current CHIS handlers, and the questions were designed to explore whether one of the interview techniques scores more highly than the other on these measures. The amount of accurate information provided during each interview will also be measured.

It is anticipated that results from this research will be used to identify effective interview strategies which can be applied by intelligence practitioners in the field in the future.

If this study raised any individual concerns, if you have any further questions about the research, or wish to make a complaint, then please do not hesitate to contact me at:

lee.moffett@northumbria.ac.uk  
Or my supervisor, Professor Gavin Oxburgh at:  
gavin.oxburgh@northumbria.ac.uk

Alternatively, please feel free to contact Northumbria University ethics committee at:  
ethicssupport@northumbria.ac.uk

Thank you again for your time and your interest, I hope you found this study both informative and enjoyable.

Lee

## Role Player Brief

### Background and Character

You are RED, the eldest of three siblings from an affluent professional family. You are well educated but struggled through your under graduate degree. You eventually gained a degree in Philosophy, but your father made it clear to you that he felt as though your degree was impractical and a waste of time. You have the impression that your father is disappointed in you and prefers your siblings.

You have always struggled to make friends, and have never felt particularly close to anyone. You enjoy reading about abstract ideas and feel as though no-one else ever really understands you and your interests. However, about three years ago you managed to make a group of friends online. You initially engaged with them on a forum discussing political philosophy and alternative political systems, but you soon discovered that this was a group of anarchist intellectuals who believed in the federalisation of nation states.

They believe that national government exists to protect the property of a wealthy minority. They believe that people will only truly be free if they are able to directly participate in the political process at a local level. This can only be achieved through the removal of centralised government.

You have adopted their philosophy and have formed an anarchist group called The 25th Brigade – demanding the secession of **STOCKFIELD** from the national government. At present, you are the only member.

Keen to raise awareness of your politics and influence government policy, you have recently graffitied the town hall and local police station with anarchist slogans. However, this seems to have gone unnoticed, and you are now considering more serious acts of criminality, such as arson, blackmail and kidnap.

However, you are aware that you will first need to attract more people to your cause, and have set up a virtual 'political stand' on Zoom. You have advertised the

meeting address online and have told anyone who's interested to join the meeting at a specified time.

### Virtual Meeting 1

The participant will join the meeting and should engage you in conversation. Please use the information above to engage the participant for at least five minutes. You should aim to disclose the following information in as natural a way as possible:

- Your name – RED;
- Email address – [SAMARA1918@redmail.com](mailto:SAMARA1918@redmail.com)
- Group name – The 25<sup>th</sup> Brigade;
- Group aim – to secede from the national government (elaborate if necessary)
- Local activities – raise awareness and attract new members;
- Past criminality – graffiti of government buildings (elaborate if necessary);
- Future criminality – if no-one will listen you are prepared to engage in more serious offences (elaborate if necessary).

### Virtual Meeting 2

The participant will join the meeting and should engage you in conversation. Please use the information above to engage the participant for at least five minutes. You should aim to disclose the following information in as natural a way as possible:

- What you want - You need them to rent a van;
- What you've done – You've kidnapped someone;
- Who – Local councillor called Xander Wright;
- Where – meet at car park of a disused pub;
- Address – THE CHIMNEY SWEEP SB11 4LY
- What next – make a video with councillor demanding secession;
- Aim – inspire people to join the cause.

## **Handler De-Brief (PEACE)**

### **Planning and Preparation (Pre-interview)**

You are a police intelligence officer working as part of a team investigating a matter of national security, in particular an individual known as RED.

RED is the apparent leader of a group of militant activists who are trying to get STOCKFIELD to secede from the rest of the UK and establish its own independent government. Earlier today RED set up an online 'political stall' on zoom, promoting his group and its cause. Police are currently investigating acts of criminal damage which are believed to have been committed by RED's group, and there is concern that their criminal activities might escalate and ultimately, someone may get hurt.

Earlier today, a trusted and cooperative police informant, or Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) was tasked to visit the online 'stall'. They were asked to engage with the person running the 'stall', to try to find out about them and their political activities. They were asked to try to glean any other information that might be useful, such as descriptions of the person and the location.

The informant has agreed to be de-briefed in a secure online room. Their regular handler is unavailable, so you have been asked to conduct the de-brief using the format below:

***Engage and Explain:***

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_

Please relax and make yourself comfortable.

You are here because you have information which may be of interest to us.

During this interview I will talk to you about what happened when you attended the online meeting.

I will also ask you about anything else that may become relevant during the interview in order to properly establish the facts and issues.

Before we begin, I would like to point out that the interview is being recorded.

This is your opportunity to tell me everything that happened in your own words. There is no time limit and you should include anything which you think might be relevant. You should try to include as much detail as possible.

***Account:***

So, please tell me everything that happened when you attended the online meeting.

[Allow a full uninterrupted account, supported by active listening, a forward leaning posture and simple utterances and prompts, such as, “and what happened next?”]

***Clarify and Challenge:***

1. In addition to what you have already told me, I would now like you to think about the person you spoke to. Could you please describe them for me?
2. I would now like you to focus on the location. Could you please describe the location for me?
3. I would now like you to think about the conversation. Could you please tell me what was said?

**Closure:**

Thank you very much, you have provided a lot of detail about the task you have undertaken.

I don't have any more questions, but before we finish, I would just like to ask if you have anything further to add?

[Allow clarification if necessary.]

Do you have any questions for me?

[Respond as appropriate for the role of police handler.]

I now intend to go away and evaluate the information you have provided, but you should be aware that you may be tasked to engage with this person again in the future.

Until then, thank you for your time.

## **Handler De-Brief (RWITS-US)**

### **Planning and Preparation (Pre-interview)**

You are a police intelligence officer working as part of a team investigating a matter of national security, in particular an individual known as RED.

RED is the apparent leader of a group of militant activists who are trying to get STOCKFIELD to secede from the rest of the UK and establish its own independent government. Earlier today RED set up an online 'political stall' on zoom, promoting his group and its cause. Police are currently investigating acts of criminal damage which are believed to have been committed by RED's group, and there is concern that their criminal activities might escalate and ultimately, someone may get hurt.

Earlier today, a trusted and cooperative police informant, or Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) was tasked to visit the online 'stall'. They were asked to engage with the person running the 'stall', to try to find out about them and their political activities. They were asked to try to glean any other information that might be useful, such as descriptions of the person and the location.

The informant has agreed to be de-briefed in a secure online room. Their regular handler is unavailable, so you have been asked to conduct the de-brief using the format below:

**Welfare:**

Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_

How are you today?

[Demonstrate active listening.]

Please relax and help yourself to refreshments if you want.

[Demonstrate autonomy.]

Before we start, is there anything you can think of that might prevent us from doing this interview?

[Allow them to voice any concerns. Demonstrate active listening and offer reassurance if necessary.]

Have you got any plans for later?

[Demonstrate active listening.]

I'm hoping to get away on time today; I'm having a meal with my family this evening.

[Self-disclosure, improvise if necessary, using truthful experiences.]

**Information:**

Thank you for completing the task today. The person you met is of particular interest to us (HIGH INTEREST), we think they are a senior organiser of some serious criminal activity (ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR), and it's important for us to understand more about them (PRO-SOCIAL MOTIVE). I'd be really interested in anything you could tell me about the person you met?

[Allow a full uninterrupted account, supported by active listening, a forward leaning posture and simple utterances and prompts, such as, "and what happened next?"]

**Narrative Probes:**

Thank you. You have told me about the person you met in the online room, and what happened there, I just have a few more questions:

1. Could you please describe the scene for me; in particular any identifiable landmarks or other people who were there?

2. Now, you mentioned a conversation you had, could you please explain how this developed, in a cause and effect sequence?
3. What was your opinion or evaluation of the person you met?
4. How did you feel during the task?
5. Is there anything else that occurred before you attended this de-brief which might be relevant?

***Tasking:***

Thank you for answering my questions. You should be aware that you may be tasked to engage with this person again in the future, so I would like to give you a bit of background information about them.

This is part of a national security investigation (ABSTRACT). We are particularly interested in an individual known as RED. RED is the apparent leader of a group of militant activists who are trying to get STOCKFIELD to secede from the rest of the UK and establish its own independent government (ORIENTATION). We assess RED is trying to increase the capability of the group by recruiting new members (COMPLICATION). We have previously identified acts of criminal damage which we believe have been committed by RED's group. We are concerned that their criminal activities might escalate and ultimately, someone may get hurt (EVALUATION). We are trying to gain a better understanding of RED and the group so we can identify any threat they might pose (RESOLUTION).

**Security:**

If you do meet RED again it is important that you keep your role covert by using a cover story, perhaps saying that you are a student who is interested in alternative political movements.

Do you have any questions about that?

[Demonstrate autonomy and active listening. Respond in the role of a police handler.]

Is there anything you would like to raise with me before you leave?

[Demonstrate active listening and offer reassurance where necessary.]

Okay, thank you for your time.

**Appendix S**

**Inside the Shadows: A survey of UK HUMINT practitioners examining their considerations when handling a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS).**

Word Count: 10224

## **Inside the Shadows: A survey of UK HUMINT practitioners examining their considerations when handling a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS).**

Law enforcement agencies in the UK are embracing evidence-based policing and recognise the importance of human source intelligence (HUMINT), in the decision-making process. A review of the literature identified six categories likely to impact the handling of a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS), **or an informant**: (i) handler personality traits; (ii) **informant** motivation; (iii) rapport; (iv) gaining cooperation; (v) obtaining information, and; (vi) detecting deception. This study sought to identify which of these categories current HUMINT practitioners considered the most when planning and conducting a meeting with an **informant**. A bespoke online survey was designed and disseminated to 34 practitioners using purposive and snowball sampling. Directed Content Analysis and Thematic Content Analysis were conducted. Results indicate that practitioners appear most concerned with gaining co-operation (iv) and detecting deception (vi). Results also found an inter-connectivity between the six categories, with **informant** handlers often having to balance competing requirements. Implications for future research are discussed.

**Keywords:** CHIS; HUMINT; intelligence; informant; handler; law enforcement; practitioner; survey; content analysis; evidence-based policing

### **A Survey of UK HUMINT Practitioners**

In January 2021, the United Kingdom (UK) government's Home Office updated the Covert Human Intelligence Sources Bill Factsheet, outlining the efficacy of Covert Human Intelligence Source's (CHIS henceforth referred to as informants) to UK law enforcement and national security (Home Office, 2021). As part of this factsheet, the UK **Home Office** noted that not only had **informants** helped to identify and disrupt a number of terrorist plots, but in 2018, they had been used by the UK's National Crime Agency to disrupt at least 30 threats to life and the safeguarding of over 200 people. In addition, the use of

**informants** in the Metropolitan Police Service, resulted in 3,500 arrests together with the seizure of over 100 firearms and 400 other weapons in the space of a single year (Home Office, 2021). The Home Office factsheet highlights the importance of **informants** to the prevention and detection of serious crime in the UK, however, the use and conduct of **informants** remains an under-researched area (Billingsley, 2009; Nunan et al., 2020a).

With the existing trend towards evidenced based policing (Heaton & Tong, 2015; Sherman, 2013; College of Policing, 2020), it is foreseeable that practitioners who handle informants will increasingly turn to the academic community for empirical solutions to operational problems. Therefore, the current study seeks to build upon previous studies (ie. Birkett & Pike, 2017; Nunan et al., 2020a; 2020b; 2020c; Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh & May, 2020) by establishing a clear framework for future research, informed by the views and concerns of experienced practitioners. To achieve this, a bespoke survey was designed to identify current and active informant handlers' main concerns. The design of the survey was informed by previous research examining the views of practitioners experienced in the collection of human source intelligence (HUMINT) in the United States (US; i.e., Redlich et al., 2014; Russano, Narchet, & Kleinman, 2014; Russano, Narchet, Kleinman, & Meissner, 2014). Although much of the extant research has been conducted in the US, predominantly in relation to terrorist detainees, a number of thematic categories were identified which appeared to be generalisable to the UK, and which were used to inform the design and analysis of the current study. These categories were: (i) handler personality traits; (ii) informant motivation; (iii) rapport; (iv) gaining cooperation; (v) obtaining information, and; (vi) detecting deception.

### Intelligence-led Policing

The traditional image of criminal justice is one in which crimes are investigated and prosecuted reactively (Dixon, 2009). However, Dixon observes that although this model still exists, it is being supplemented by a proactive model, which places an emphasis on public safety by seeking to identify and prevent serious crime before it occurs. This is perhaps best exemplified in the UK by counter-

terrorism legislation which, following attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York, USA, in 2001, evolved to create a raft of preparatory offences designed to enable the prosecution of terrorists before they committed an attack (Pearse, 2009). However, proactive intervention requires timely and accurate intelligence (Dixon, 2009; Pearse, 2009) and it is arguable that the emphasis on community safety and proactive investigation, hastened by the global threat of Islamist terrorism, led to the widespread implementation of intelligence-led policing (Ratcliffe, 2002).

In the UK, the foundations of an intelligence-led approach were laid out in a 1997 report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. They argued that intelligence-led policing was a cost-effective means of reducing and preventing crime, and its principles were quickly adopted (Ratcliffe, 2002). In the UK, this led to the implementation of the National Intelligence Model that introduced an "intelligence-led approach to policing" (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2005, p. 8). Although this model is now somewhat dated, the pre-eminence of an intelligence-led approach can still be seen in the National Decision Model (2014) which highlights the importance of gathering information as the initial stage of the decision-making process. The Association of Chief Police Officers (2007) list 20 potential sources of information, including Closed Circuit Television and forensic science, but specifically highlight the importance of identifying and managing informants.

HUMINT can therefore be seen to be a cornerstone of an intelligence-led approach to criminal justice which seeks to minimise risk and maximise public safety; furthermore, with the recent emergence of evidence-based policing (Fleming & Rhodes, 2017; Heaton & Tong, 2015; Sherman, 2013), it is foreseeable that HUMINT practitioners in the UK (and elsewhere) will increasingly turn to academic research for evidence-based solutions to human source management. It is thus imperative to understand firstly, how the legislative and operational environment in the UK is likely to impact HUMINT practitioners, and secondly, to which areas of human source management academic research might reasonably contribute.

The HUMINT Environment in the UK

Coulam (2006) describes HUMINT as “information gained from people” (p. 8). Nunan, et al. (2020a) adopt a similarly broad view, defining HUMINT as, “...the discipline charged with eliciting intelligence through interactions with human sources” (p. 1). However, such a definition, when applied to a forensic or law enforcement context, encompasses so many conceivable situations, such as a witness statement, a suspect interview, or even a passer-by directing a police officer towards the scene of a crime, that it is rendered almost meaningless. Consequently, many researchers examining HUMINT have conceptualised an interview situation, and have drawn distinctions based upon the objectives of the interviewer; specifically, interviews conducted for the purpose of gaining evidence in a criminal investigation, and those conducted for the purpose of gathering intelligence (Intelligence Science Board Study on Educating Information, 2006; Evans et al., 2010; Evans et al., 2013; Vrij & Granhag, 2014).

Even with this distinction, the term HUMINT encapsulates a broad range of intelligence collection activities, and researchers often refer, almost interchangeably, to prisoners of war, defectors, detainees, volunteers who walk into an embassy or police station to provide information, people subjected to a stop at ports, and standard confidential informants (Borum, 2006; Brandon, 2014; Drogin, 2007; Hazlett, 2006; Vrij & Granhag, 2014). Whilst the objectives of the interviewer across each of these situations may be identical (i.e., to gather intelligence), the situational dilemma of the human source is often very different. For example, Kleinman (2006) observed that two apparently similar activities (i.e., the interrogation of a detained combatant and debriefing a tasked informant) are actually different in terms of psychological mindset and physical environment. According to Kleinman, a tasked source shares their handler’s objective, and is in a cooperative relationship with them, whereas a detainee is more likely to view their interrogator as an enemy, and will often seek to withhold known information. In relation to the physical environment, Kleinman notes that a source being debriefed engages with their handler voluntarily and is free to leave at any time. However, a detained source is in a custodial setting, and their physical situation is within the control of the interrogating officer. Thus, a human source could be considered to exist in one of four possible categories along a 2 (physical situation: incarcerated or community) x 2 (access to information: active [actively acquired information having been tasked to do

so] or passive [passively obtained target information without the expectation of having to later divulge it to an interviewer]) matrix.

Much of the research conducted to date has been driven by the mistreatment of terrorist detainees in military detention centres, such as Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay (Alison & Alison, 2017; Brandon, 2014; Otis, 2006). Consequently, much of the extant research envisages a human source who is incarcerated and has passive access to information. However, in the UK, there is a legislative definition of an informant, known as a CHIS. Whilst this definition applies to both undercover police officers and informants, the current article will consider how this definition impacts informants and informant handlers. A CHIS is defined as any person who:

establishes or maintains a personal or other relationship with another person for the covert purpose of facilitating the doing of anything falling within paragraph (b) or (c);

covertly uses such a relationship to obtain information or to provide access to any information to another person; or

covertly discloses information obtained by the use of such a relationship or as a consequence of the existence of such a relationship.

(Home Office, 2018)

Three key features of a CHIS can be discerned from this definition: (i) they are used to obtain information, meaning an informant can be tasked to actively gather information on behalf of their handlers (Home Office, 2018); (ii) information obtained is from, or about, another person, meaning, the information does not pertain to the actions or intentions of the informant themselves, and; (iii) the information is passed covertly, or, put another way, with the expectation of confidentiality (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2007). By their very definition, an informant (in a UK context) is an active source of information, and it can be assumed that many informants are not incarcerated (Kleinman S. M., KUBARK counterintelligence interrogation review: Observations of an interrogator, 2006). To date,

this specific situational dilemma has largely been neglected by the scientific community. Consequently, HUMINT practitioners handling informants in the UK are left with a scant evidence-base to inform their practice.

#### Areas of Relevant Scientific Research

There is a growing body of research examining HUMINT practices in the UK, including recent practitioner surveys. The first was a study commissioned by the UK's National Crime Agency which conducted semi-structured interviews with their informant handlers (N=5) (Birkett & Pike, 2017). They wanted to establish which methods of communication, ranging from traditional face-to-face meetings to modern internet-based technologies, handlers use with their informants, and specifically explored how this impacted upon rapport. This was followed by Nunan et al. (2020a; 2020b) who conducted structured interviews on source handlers (N=24) within England and Wales, focussing on those engaged in counter terrorism investigations. Their first study (2020a) consisted of eight directed questions relating to rapport, and found that source handlers recognise the importance of establishing and maintaining rapport with their informants. Additionally, handlers reported using a variety of rapport building techniques. Their second study (2020b) focused on interviewing techniques designed for the elicitation of information, with source handlers reporting that they utilise elicitation techniques when de-briefing informants. These surveys were followed by Nunan et al. (2020c) and Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh and May (2020) who examined real-life telephone conversations (N=105) between seven handler and informant pairs. Again, these studies focussed on the use of rapport (Nunan et al., 2020c) and elicitation techniques (Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh & May, 2020). The importance of rapport and elicitation techniques to the HUMINT practitioner was initially established through research conducted in the US (Nunan et al., 2020a; 2020b), however, there are other areas of potential research which have not yet been explored and which may also be of importance to UK informant handlers.

US-based research was prompted primarily by events at military detention centres, and has consequently sought to understand and improve how HUMINT practitioners can elicit information from a human

source in a humane manner (Brandon, 2014). This process was begun by a review of potentially relevant scientific knowledge by the Intelligence Science Board on behalf of the US National Defense Intelligence College (2006) and was followed by a number of practitioner surveys (Redlich et al., 2014; Russano, Narchet, & Kleinman, 2014; Russano, Narchet, Kleinman, & Meissner, 2014). Whilst this research focusses on human sources who could be categorised as being incarcerated passive sources of information, it was reviewed as part of the current study to identify thematic categories affecting HUMINT professionals which are likely to impact upon practitioners in the UK. The authors identified several thematic categories which could be generalised to UK informant handling. For example, respondents to the Redlich et al. (2014) survey reported a reliance on “rapport and relationship building” (p. 817) during intelligence interviews, whilst also highlighting a number of personality traits which were deemed to improve the capability of HUMINT professionals to elicit information. Russano, Narchet and Kleinman (2014) and Russano, Narchet, Kleinman, and Meissner (2014) asked both practitioners and support workers (interpreters and analysts) a series of questions focussing on practitioner personality traits, information elicitation, establishing rapport and detecting deception, and found support for the importance of each of these factors. Observational studies of active community-based sources conducted in Israel (Hess & Amir, 2002) and the US (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016) also evidence the importance of these thematic categories. In addition, understanding source motivation and gaining their cooperation were also observed as being important to practitioners in contexts featuring a non-incarcerated source. Here, gaining co-operation relates to an active human source who is prepared to undertake tasking on behalf of their handler, rather than referring to a co-operative interviewee who is prepared to provide information in response to questions posed (Hess & Amir, 2002). Two further studies, one in the US (Miller, 2011), and one in the UK (Billingsley, 2001), also acknowledge the importance of understanding source motivation, and specifically explored this topic by surveying actual human sources. Thus, in sum, six thematic categories can be identified from the literature as being of concern to HUMINT practitioners: (i) handler personality traits; (ii) source motivation; (iii) gaining co-operation; (iv) eliciting information; (v) establishing rapport, and; (vi) detecting deception.

## Current Study

The aim of the current study was to conduct a survey of current and former UK-based informant handlers to identify the comparative importance of the six identified thematic categories. This presents a unique contribution to the current research area. Although the thematic categories were identified from previous research, much of this research was conducted outside of the UK and focussed on incarcerated passive sources of information. Although recent studies have previously sought the views of UK informant handlers (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Nunan et al, 2020a; Nunan et al., 2020b), in none of these studies were the six identified categories explicitly presented to participants, nor were participants asked to rate their relative importance. Consequently, whilst research on each of the individual categories is likely to be beneficial, there is a danger that areas of potential research which are most important to handlers of active community-based informants in the UK will be neglected in favour of those areas which are of most importance to US operatives seeking to humanely elicit information from incarcerated passive sources of information.

Given the current study is exploratory in nature and in a relatively under-studied field (Billingsley, 2009), we anticipate that our results could be used to inform future (and much-needed) academic research leading to the development of an applicable evidence-based approach to informant handling in the UK (Fleming & Rhodes, 2017; Heaton & Tong, 2015).

## Method

### Participants

An initial purposive sample was established through senior police officers known to the first and second authors across five force areas in England and Wales. Snowball sampling was then used, with the initial purposive sample being asked to forward the survey on to specialist individuals and/or units who would be qualified to complete the survey. Participants who completed the survey were also invited to share it with other current or former informant handlers.

To maximise the likelihood that the data analysed was from an eligible sample, a conservative approach was adopted to data inclusion, specifically, partially completed surveys (N=15) were discounted from further analysis. The final sample (N=34, male = 27, female = 7) appears to be a mature and experienced sample, with the most frequently selected age range being between 50-54 years (N=10) and the most frequently selected length of service as an informant handler being between 6-10 years (N=14).

## Procedure

Following full ethical clearance, and given the sensitive nature of handling informants (Home Office, 2018), a pilot study was conducted on a sample of three current practitioners. These practitioners were asked to review the content of the survey to ensure that questions were not deemed too intrusive and did not breach expected levels of confidentiality. This is especially important given that law enforcement agencies have an ongoing duty of care to their sources (ACPO, 2007). Having conducted this pilot/consultation phase, an electronic version of the survey was created using Qualtrics software and a link was disseminated to the initial purposive sample via email. Information contained within the introductory email informed participants of the purpose of the survey and assured participants that they were not obliged to participate in the study, nor would they be required to leave their demographic details or any other information if they felt that this would breach the confidential nature of their role. Participants completed the survey by clicking on the electronic link. They were first required to provide informed consent before answering a series of 10 questions.

The first three questions were automatically randomised word association questions. Participants were asked to list as many words that they could think of which they associate with: (i) the word CHIS; (ii) the phrase CHIS handler, and; (iii) the phrase CHIS meeting. These words and phrases were taken from the CHIS Code of Practice (Home Office, 2018) and were specifically designed to trigger associations to actual informant meetings and the dynamic that exists between handler and informant during these meetings. The fourth question was open-ended, asking participants what their main considerations were when handling informants. Question 5 then presented participants with the six thematic categories

(handler personality traits, rapport, informant motivation, gaining cooperation, obtaining information and detecting deception) and they were asked to rate the relative importance of each one on a continuous visual analogue scale (0 = low importance, 10 = high importance). The same thematic categories were presented for question 6 and participants were asked to select which one they believed required more scientific / psychological research to improve working practices. This question included the option to indicate other, and an opportunity to expand on other if this was selected. In questions 7-9, participants were asked to provide demographic details (age, gender, length of service as an informant handler). Finally, participants were provided with an opportunity to add any further comments which they believed may be relevant to this research, or to elaborate on any of the answers they provided.

The survey produced both quantitative and qualitative data, consequently, results were analysed using three methods of analysis: descriptive statistics, directed content analysis and thematic content analysis. This triangulation of analysis provides the data with greater depth and breadth, allowing more nuanced conclusions to be drawn.

Following feedback from the pilot study it was agreed that all responses would be anonymised and that raw data would be stored securely and only reproduced as part of this research in a sanitised version.

## Analyses Conducted

### Directed Content Analysis

Content analysis is a means of taking qualitative data and imposing a quantitative structure upon it (Youngs D. E., *Investigative psychology: David Canter's approach to studying criminals and criminal action*, 2013). This is particularly the case with directed content analysis, which can be applied when a theoretical framework consisting of defined thematic categories already exists (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Given the aim of the current research was to establish the relative importance of a variety of pre-determined categories, this analysis was deemed as the most suitable for questions 1 to 4. Directed content analysis involves the coding of free narrative text into recognised categories before using this

data to create a hierarchical table of results (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This can then be used to compare the frequency occurrence of each coded category, thereby providing a more nuanced understanding of the relative importance of each individual theme, and how the abstract categories identified in the literature translate into practical considerations.

Despite having pre-determined categories, coding of responses into one of these thematic categories evolved inductively with reference to the entire dataset often providing context for ambiguous phraseology. For example, where one participant might simply record the word “access” as a consideration when handling informants, another may expand upon this idea by referring to “access to information”, thereby assisting with the codification of the single word, “access” as being a consideration of obtaining information. Consequently, through reference to the literature and an inductive interpretation of the data set, an operationalised definition of each category was developed, as outlined below:

Handler personality traits: Selection of this category was based on reports in the literature of current, historical or recommended personality profiling of intelligence practitioners (Kleinman, 2006; Redlich et al., 2014; Russano, Narchet, & Kleinman, 2014; Russano, Narchet, Kleinman, & Meissner, 2014) as well as the practice of specifically pairing the handler and informant (Birkett & Pike, 2017) – this has the potential to be an area of future research which psychologists are likely able to contribute. Therefore, words or phrases describing handler characteristics were placed in this category; frequent ones included “confident”, “introvert”, “outlier” and “good judge of character”, but also included longer descriptions such as, “never emotionally invest”. One respondent used the phrase, “you are still a copper”, highlighting the importance of their job to the handler’s personal identity. Thus, words or phrases relating to their role or employment such as, “officer”, or anything which might impact upon their work, such as “personal reputation”, were also included here.

Rapport: Recent research has been undertaken to operationalise the definition of rapport (e.g., Alison et al., 2013; Alison & Alison, 2017; Alison et al., 2014; Nunan, Stanier, Milne, Shawyer, Walsh & May,

2020). Rather than a series of prescriptive techniques, Alison et al. see rapport as an approach or mindset based upon non-accusatory and respectful interpersonal responses. Nunan et al. (2020a) also emphasise the interpersonal nature of rapport. Therefore, words or phrases demonstrating a consideration of a respectful interpersonal interaction, such as, “active listening” and “empathy”, were included in this category. Nunan et al. (2020a) also note that sales techniques, such as those identified by Cialdini (2009), are often used by handlers to establish rapport with their informants. These techniques involve things such as emphasising similarities and demonstrating affection for the other person (Cialdini, 2009). Consequently, words or phrases emphasising presumed similarities, such as “humane”, or affection, such as “friendly” or “brilliant”, were also included in this category. Additionally, Nunan et al. (2020a) observe that rapport, at least within the context of a relationship between informant and handler, could often be fluid and evolving but ought to be based on, “Managing their motivations and welfare” (Nunan et al., 2020a, p.3). Given the reported importance of welfare to rapport (Nunan, et al., 2020a; Stanier & Nunan, 2021), anything pertaining to the informants’ wellbeing such as “mental health” or “physical wellbeing” were also included in this category. The importance of these two linked concepts (i.e., rapport and welfare) was demonstrated by the fact that both words frequently occurred throughout the dataset.

Informant motivation: Some previous observational studies have recorded the importance of understanding source motivation to practitioners (see Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Hess & Amir, 2002) and studies have been conducted in both the US and the UK examining the motives of a covert human source (Billingsley, 2001; Miller, 2011). These studies identified a number of motivations, including leniency in the criminal justice system, financial reward, revenge or removing criminal competitors, and even moral or interpersonal motivations. Consequently, any word or phrase relating to one of these potential motives (e.g., “greedy”, “vindictive” and “concerned citizen”) were included in this category. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the findings of previous observational studies, there were a number of words or phrases simply expressing a direct concern for understanding informant motivation such as, “understanding the CHIS – motivation”, or more simply, “Motive, motive, motive!”, these too were included in this category.

Gaining co-operation: Gaining co-operation has often been studied in a forensic context in terms of forensic interviewing and is often associated to either (or both) information elicitation and rapport (see e.g., Alison et al., 2013). However, an informant is not simply an interviewee with passive access to information, rather, they are an active participant in the gathering and disclosure of target information (Billingsley, 2009; Home Office, 2018; Kleinman, 2006; Storm et al., 2015; Schirman, 2014; Yousef & Brackin, 2010). Therefore, gaining the co-operation of an active human source is not simply about accessing information which is already in their possession, but is more concerned with tasking them to obtain that information in the first place (Schirman, 2014). Despite being seen as an important part of the source handling process, this is an under-studied area of research, leaving practitioners to rely on intuition and the experience of their predecessors to try to recruit and gain the co-operation of a potential human source (Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016). Given the emphasis of tasking contained within the definition of a CHIS (Home Office, 2018), any words relating to the tasking of an informant, such as “direction and tasking”, or techniques used to persuade an informant to cooperate with law enforcement, such as “make them think you like them” were included in this category. Additionally, any words or phrases relating to concepts which might facilitate or ensure the success of informant tasking were included in this category (i.e., “CHIS safety”, “protection”, “tradecraft” and “covert methodology”). A further sub-category of phrases included in this category pertain to risk, namely the risk from a non-cooperative informant. This is exemplified by phrases such as, “ensure compliant” and “who’s running who?”, and includes words which might impact upon their compliance, such as those describing the informant as “sneaky”, “unpredictable” or as a “manipulator”.

Obtaining information: Information elicitation, including how it is done and how it can be improved, has perhaps received the most attention from academic research seeking to inform HUMINT practice (see Brandon, 2014; Vrij & Granhag, 2014; Nunan et al., 2020b; Nunan et al., 2020c) and the requirement to obtain information is encapsulated in the definition of a CHIS (Home Office, 2018). Consequently, any words or phrases mentioning “intelligence” or “information” were included in this category, including words relating to “access” to information or the “dissemination” of information, as well as those referring

to the “value” or “reliability” of information. Synonyms describing the informants role as an intelligence gatherer, such as “agent” were also included in this category, as were descriptions which emphasised the handlers function as a gatherer of information, such as “debriefers”.

Detecting deception: Deception is described as, “A successful or unsuccessful deliberate attempt, without forewarning, to create in another a belief which the communicator considers to be untrue” (Vrij, 2008, p.15). Consequently, any word or phrase placing an emphasis on “truth” or “lies” were included in this category. However, perhaps in response to the Butler Report (2005) and its emphasis on validating intelligence (Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 2005), there were a number of words or phrases that mentioned “validation”, “evaluation” or “corroboration” which were also included in this category. A number of participants also questioned the integrity of their informants, with several asking, “can they be trusted?”, or “are they just telling you what you want to hear?”. Such phrases clearly represented a consideration of deception and the handler’s requirement to detect it, therefore, they too were included in this category.

#### Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Responses to questions five and six were analysed using descriptive data. Specifically, in relation to question five, where participants were asked to rate the relative importance of each thematic category along a continuous visual analogue scale, mean scores and standard deviations were obtained, whilst frequency data were obtained to identify which thematic category participants believed required further research (question six). The categories were then ranked accordingly. The frequency data obtained following directed content analysis was also subjected to descriptive data analysis, to provide a percentage of how many words or phrases used related to each thematic category.

#### Thematic Content Analysis

Question 10 was far less directed than others and allowed participants to reflect on the topic of the questionnaire. Consequently, the responses to this question were subjected to Thematic Content Analysis

(Braun & Clarke, 2006; Wilkinson, 2009). Specifically, each clause was analysed for an occurrence of a new thematic category not previously considered as part of the directed content analysis. It was envisaged that this form of analysis would permit an expansion of the research area if responses indicated it was necessary.

## Results

### Directed Content Analysis

Analysis of questions 1 to 4 (word association and main considerations) involved the categorisation of each word or phrase into one of the pre-determined thematic categories where it was perceived to represent a consideration of that category. This process resulted in frequency data for each pre-determined category which was then subjected to descriptive data analysis. Results found that words or phrases relating to gaining co-operation were referenced most frequently with 41.90% of all words used being in this category. Words relating to handler personality occurred with the least amount of frequency with only 2.97% of all words used being in this category. The total and average number of words or phrases referenced for each category across questions subjected to directed content analysis can be found in Table 1.

----- Table 1 about here -----

### Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Descriptive data analysis conducted on responses to question five (relative importance of each category) found that all categories received an average score above the midpoint (Range = 7.21 - 9.08) with detecting deception receiving the highest score. All scores (with SDs) are outlined in table 2.

----- Table 2 about here -----

Descriptive data was also used to analyse responses to question six (which category requires more research). Again, the thematic category detecting deception was ranked highest by 42.42% of

participants. Of note, all participants selected a category extrapolated from the extant research, with none of them selecting the other option. Full results are shown in table 3, one participant chose not to make a selection, so the results shown are from the 33 participants who answered this question.

----- Table 3 about here -----

### Thematic Content Analysis

The final question which allowed participants to add any further comments or to elaborate on their previous answers was subjected to thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Wilkinson, 2009). The main objective was to identify any new thematic areas which had not been extrapolated from the literature review or explored as part of previous analyses. In total, 18 participants left a comment to the final question. Four new themes emerged as part of this process: (i) the importance of informants; (ii) matching informants and handler; (iii) training and support, and; (iv) interconnectivity of thematic categories.

### The importance of informants

A number of participants identified the importance of informants, with one participant stating that, “CHIS is a vital element in any conflict whether a battle against a foreign power or an organised crime group” (#3), whilst another commented that informants were, “Integral and vital to good policing” (#13). The same respondent (#13) continued to identify what they believed made a good informant so unique, “No-one can get to the root of a problem quicker than someone who is linked in with the community or a certain demographic”, before summarising, “...they are an invaluable resource” (#13). Another participant expanded this theme, observing that informants and their handling are undervalued, blaming this on, “Populist politics and a desire to give the public a visible police presence which, whilst reassuring, has little genuine impact” (#33).

### Matching informants and handler

One participant noted that whilst the survey asked about handler personality traits, “the personality of the CHIS is also critical” (#6). Where similar views were expressed, participants often linked these back to the importance of handler personality traits, or advice on how best to handle an informant such as treating them with “empathy and showing interest in their own personal everyday life” (#31) or, “be open, honest and professional from the outset” (#9). Another participant advocated matching the handler to the informant, observing that, “often the wrong handlers are put with the wrong CHIS” (#2), whilst another believed that successful informant handling, “needs a more psychological approach by the handler” (#6).

### Training and support

The need for a “psychological approach” was also identified by participants who commented on their training. They noted that during their training there was often an emphasis on the practical elements of informant handling such as “tradecraft” and “writing the subsequent report” (#12) rather than psychological skills, such as establishing the kind of rapport that is “built-up over the period that you handle a CHIS” (#9), or detecting deception. As well as commenting on their training, participants also observed that once in their role, they often felt insufficiently supported. One participant commented that the handler’s role, “is rarely understood by senior ranks” and went on to note that there, “is little or no recognition of the stressful working conditions and the impact on family life” (#33). The theme of “stress” was repeated by other participants with one commenting that the “potential dangers are very real” (#27), whilst others advocated for, “periodic counselling/psychological debrief for handlers” (#23) or, “more psychological support of persons undertaking the role” (#14).

### Inter-connectivity of thematic categories

It was especially noteworthy that many of those who responded to the final question used this opportunity to re-emphasise the importance of the thematic categories identified from the literature, with one participant noting that, “you asked which was the foremost consideration relating to a CHIS. The true answer should have been ‘all of the above’” (#30). However, what became evident from the responses

to the final question was the inter-connectivity of the thematic categories. For example, one participant observed that, “recruiting and handling of CHIS is a difficult task requiring special skills” (#3), before noting that an important element in achieving this is human intuition. The same participant expands on this by explaining, “I knew when they were lying but I didn’t know why I knew” (#3). This answer tends to indicate that handler personality traits – or “human intuition” – can be a key contributor to both gaining co-operation and detecting deception. Another added support to the belief that personality traits were vital in gaining co-operation, stating that informants “would not exist without their initial successful recruitment” noting that “chance and circumstances will always play a part in this process [but] it cannot be denied that some handlers are more successful than others. Why is this?” (#10). Another highlighted the importance of understanding informant motivation to gaining cooperation, observing that, “If you don’t understand the motivation you don’t have a CHIS” (#5). Another respondent linked an understanding of motivation to detecting deception, stating that, “understanding motivation for providing information [is] of paramount important [sic] to gauge [whether] info provided is real and true” (#27). There would also appear to be conflict between some of the thematic categories, with some handlers perhaps having to balance competing requirements. Of particular concern seemed to be the difficulty of maintaining rapport whilst managing other obligations. For example, one respondent commented on the requirement for handlers “to complete effective dynamic risk assessments ... whilst retaining rapport” (#16). Another made a similar observation, stating that, “Detecting deceit is a key skill which needs to be achieved without the aid of polygraphs as that destroys any trust [and] rapport that has been built over the length of the relationship” (#12).

## Discussion

Despite an increasing interest in HUMINT over the last two decades, there is a dearth of research that has examined the domestic situation within the UK. Previous studies seeking the views of dedicated informant handlers have tended to emphasise the importance of a single concept in isolation, such as rapport (Birkett & Pike, 2017; Nunan et al., 2020a) or information elicitation (Nunan et al., 2020b). The current study was able to utilise previous research to focus upon the specific legal and operational

situation within the UK and to seek a broader range of practitioner perceptions.

#### Thematic Categories: Importance and Inter-connectivity

The current study identified six thematic categories which previous researchers have noted as being important considerations to HUMINT practitioners. Our results provide support for the importance of these categories. When asked to rate the importance of each one on a continuous scale, the average score for each category was well above the mid-point. Thematic content analysis of the final question validated this finding with several participants re-affirming the importance of one or more of the thematic categories identified. This finding provides researchers with a clear framework for future research seeking to develop an applicable evidence-base for informant handlers in the UK (and perhaps wider afield).

However, the thematic content analysis of the final question provides a strong indication that participants struggled to identify a single category as being the most important because they are, in fact, all inter-dependent. Participants indicated that handler personality and understanding informant motivations were both crucial when trying to gain the co-operation of the informant, or detect deceit. Participants also highlighted potential conflict between different categories, due to handlers having to maintain rapport and obtain information whilst simultaneously attempting to assess risk and detect deception.

#### Detecting Deception and Gaining Co-operation

When presented with pre-determined categories, practitioners selected detecting deception as both the most important consideration and the one requiring further research. However, directed content analysis found that most words or phrases provided in response to the word association prompts and the free text response related to the concept of gaining cooperation. There are various possible explanations for this discrepancy. One could be that participants were expressing a difference between strategic and tactical considerations. The word association questions were specifically designed to prompt recollections of actual informant meetings involving handlers and informants, whereas a question asking about future

research in particular, is likely to elicit a more strategic consideration of the issues affecting informant management. Consequently, it could be argued that the tactical considerations which most occupy a handler during a meeting, such as gaining co-operation and obtaining information, are very different from those which perhaps occupy their thoughts pre- and post- meeting such as detecting deceit and understanding informant motivation.

However, a further explanation is perhaps related to the concept of deceit. Detecting deception research, including that aimed at assisting HUMINT practitioners, has generally focussed on identifying a misrepresentation of fact, often pertaining to the specific actions of the interviewee themselves (for a review see, Vrij & Granhag, 2014). It was this concept of deceit which informed the categorisation of words or phrases subjected to directed content analysis, and undoubtedly this form of deception is of concern to practitioners, as almost 10% of all words or phrases recorded related to this category. However, content analysis identified another form of possible deception, namely, deceptive intent. This is exemplified by phrases such as “who’s running who?”, references to “danger” and “risk” and descriptions of informants as being “sneaky” and “unpredictable”. Given their association to informant compliance, these words and phrases were categorised as considerations of gaining co-operation, however, they could also be interpreted as considerations of deceptive intent. An example of a human source with deceptive intent is provided by Hassan Yousef (Schirman, 2014; Yousef & Brackin, 2010). Yousef, a human source who reported on the activities of Hamas to the Israeli domestic intelligence agency, Shin Bet, states that the reason he originally began meeting with his handlers was to identify opportunities to murder them. In these circumstances, Yousef is not providing false information or actively lying to his handlers, but he is misrepresenting his intentions, posing as a co-operative source when he in fact harboured malicious intent. As one of our participants commented in the final question, even if such situations are relatively rare, “the potential dangers are very real” (#27).

This is further evidence of the inter-connectivity between the identified categories. Interpreted this way, there is no discrepancy between participants’ desire for more research into detecting deception and the dominance of words associated to gaining co-operation in the free text responses. They represent the

same thing: a requirement to take a potentially hostile source, such as Youssef, and turn them into a co-operative one. When interpreting deception as including malicious intent, the threat posed by a deceptive source would explain why practitioners rate detecting deception as the most important thematic consideration, and why they desire more research on the subject.

#### Evidence-based versus Craft Policing

The UK's College of Policing is committed to promoting evidence-based policing (College of Policing, 2020). The College's concept of evidence is a broad one, with the aim of incorporating the "best available" (College of Policing, 2020) evidence into practice. Whilst this phraseology strikes a pragmatic tone, it is clear that the best available evidence should still be based on empirical research (Heaton & Tong, 2015; Sherman, 2013; College of Policing, 2020). However, as exemplified by references to human intuition (#3), and the observation that "some handlers are more successful than others" (#10), informant handling as a specialisation could be seen as a craft. Fleming and Rhodes (2017) observe that police officers often describe their profession in terms of a craft, which they define as "practical beliefs and practices" or "contextual knowledge" (pp.9-10). This is often evidenced by officers relying on experience as a means of making judgements. This can be observed in our own sample where participant #3 states: "I knew when they were lying but I didn't know why I knew".

There are limitations to relying on craft or experiential knowledge (Fleming & Rhodes, 2017); as the quote above from our own sample exemplifies, relying on experience may lead to decisions based on feeling rather than logic (Dresser, 2019). Additionally, maintaining a culture of craft knowledge is at odds with the impetus towards an evidence-based policing model (Dresser, 2019), and there is a risk that informant handlers relying on their experience to make decisions could come in to conflict with colleagues and senior leaders who are increasingly educated in the benefits of an evidence-based approach (Palmer et al., 2019; Sherman, 2013). The drive towards evidence-based policing was partly prompted by a governmental desire for greater accountability from a public institution (Palmer et al., 2019; Sherman, 2013), and it could be argued that the covert nature of informant handling has insulated

it from the incursions of an evidence-based culture (Billingsley, 2009). However, the ongoing Undercover Policing Inquiry (2021) demonstrates that once covert policing crafts are coming under increasing public scrutiny, and it can be anticipated that there will be a growing expectation for senior leaders to legitimise their decisions on the grounds of an extant evidence-base (Sherman, 2013).

Gathering information and intelligence is the formative phase in the UK's National Decision Model (The National Decision Model, 2014), and informants are a critical source of intelligence (Association of Chief Police Officers, 2007). High consequence operational and political decisions are made in response to HUMINT (Drogin, 2007; Intelligence Science Board Study on Educating Information, 2006; Jervis, 2006; Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 2005), and senior decision makers are unlikely to be comfortable basing such decisions on the individual craftsmanship of a particular handler. It is foreseeable then, that the organisational desire for evidence-based practice will increasingly influence informant handling.

#### Strengths and Limitations

As with all research, there are strengths and limitations. Whilst the total size of the population of UK-based informant handlers cannot be ascertained, a sample size of 34 participants provides a demonstrable increase from previous research, and is undoubtedly a strength of this study.

There are limitations to the sampling method employed. In particular, there is a risk that participants recruited as part of a snowball sample will be selected on the basis of sharing similar views and characteristics. To some degree this is perhaps unavoidable, after all informant handlers have self-selected for a specialist role within law enforcement and are likely to share some characteristics (Billingsley, 2009; Henry, et al., 2019). Furthermore, given the covert nature of informant handling it was essential that participant anonymity was guaranteed as far as possible. Clearly, participants were likely aware of colleagues who also completed the survey (i.e. whoever forwarded the survey to them), however, use of a snowball sample meant that participants identities were protected from the experimenters. Consequently, this method of sampling was deemed most appropriate and efficacious for

the authors to gain access to a population which is necessarily covert.

Given that the study was conducted online and identifying details were purposely excluded, it could be argued that not all the participants were qualified to respond, therefore a stringent inclusion/exclusion criteria was employed, with partially completed surveys being excluded from the dataset. Additionally, our dataset provides some evidence that participants represented an experienced sample of informant handlers; only 14.71% of participants stated that they had 5 or fewer years' experience as an informant handler, and whilst only 18 participants opted to add any further comments in the final question, those that did either directly referenced their own experience as an informant handler or demonstrated reflectivity of their own practical experience.

A particular strength of this research is that it introduces something new to the extant literature base. This is the first study to re-conceptualise a human source as being either active or passive and being either incarcerated or in the community, and to recognise the unique situational and legislative dilemma of a UK informant. The aim of this study was to develop a framework of practitioner considerations which could be used to inform future research. Three previous studies have sought the views of UK informant handlers; however, this is the first to explore the relative importance of specified thematic categories. Researchers will be able to utilise the insights gained from this study to further explore these categories, and their impact on informant handling.

#### Implications for Practice and Future Research

The six thematic categories presented to participants as part of this study were taken from the extant literature on HUMINT. As such, many of them, in particular obtaining information and detecting deception (Brandon, 2014; Vrij & Granhag, 2014), have been subjected to empirical research. However, much of the research conducted to date has focussed on a single thematic category in isolation. Based upon findings from the current study, future research should be cognisant of the interconnectivity of the various thematic categories and examine ways to balance the competing demands which are placed on practitioners.

The current study also identified a concept of deception which has not previously been considered within the HUMINT literature, namely, deceptive or malicious intent. This form of deceit appears to be an overriding concern for practitioners, directly influencing the results of this study. Therefore, understanding this form of deception and providing practical tools which could be applied by informant handlers to detect it, would be a potential area of future research.

Given the unique legislative and operational environment in the UK, as well as the inter-connectivity of potentially competing requirements (i.e. building rapport and detecting deception), the transferrability of tools and techniques designed to assist police officers in other forensic situations, such as suspect or witness interviews, cannot be assumed. One particular participant provided an example of this when they said, “Detecting deceit is a key skill which needs to be achieved without the aid of polygraphs as that destroys any trust and rapport” (#12). Polygraphs are already used as part of sex offender management (Gannon et al., 2012; Grubin, 2010; HMG, 2020) and it was announced in 2017 that informants engaged in counter-terrorism operations within the UK would also be subjected to polygraph examinations (Wilford, 2017). However, it is clear from the findings of the current study, that when considering informant handling at least, the assumption of transferrability could be misleading.

What is clear however, is that a bespoke evidence-base ought to be developed to inform and assist informant handlers who may be tempted to view their specialisation as a craft. Fleming and Rhodes (2017) lament the rigid dichotomy of evidence-based versus craft policing, and encourage the incorporation of experiential knowledge into the development of an effective and acceptable research-base. It is hoped that the current study provides a framework for this to develop in the future.

## Conclusion

By focusing on the specific legislative and operational environment of HUMINT practitioners in the UK, this study re-conceptualised informants as active sources of information who are most likely operating within their communities. The situational dilemma of an active community based source and their handlers is likely to be very different from that of the incarcerated passive sources of information which

have so far dominated the research area (Kleinman S. M., KUBARK counterintelligence interrogation review: Observations of an interrogator, 2006). What is clear from this study is that informant handlers in the UK are affected by the same practical considerations as their HUMINT counterparts in other jurisdictions, however, they are often required to balance the need to build rapport and obtain information against the risk of a deceptive informant harbouring malicious intent.

It is foreseeable that the trend towards evidence-based policing in the UK will influence informant handling in the future, with practitioners and senior decision makers increasingly turning to the academic community for guidance, and results from this study provide a framework for future research. In particular, researchers should be cognisant of the inter-connectivity of sometimes competing considerations and requirements. However, as one respondent commented: “Any research into the CHIS arena is welcome” (#33).

#### Acknowledgements

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#### Disclosure and Ethics Statement

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of [INSTITUTION] and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study

## **Appendix T**

Title:

Mapping the Lie: A Smallest Space Analysis of Truthful and Deceptive Mock-informant Accounts.

Words: 6199

### **Abstract**

Detecting informant deception is a key concern for law enforcement officers, with implications for resource-management, operational decision-making, and protecting officers from risk of harm. However, the situational dilemma of a police informant, otherwise known as a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS), is unique. Informants are tasked to obtain information about the transgressive actions or intentions of their associates, knowing they will later disclose this information to a handler. Thus, techniques for detecting deception in other forensic scenarios may not be transferrable to an informant interview. Utilising truthful and deceptive transcripts from a unique mock-informant role play paradigm, Smallest Space Analysis was used to map the co-occurrence of content themes. Results found that deceptive content frequently co-occurred with emotive and low-potency content themes. This provides support for the future analysis of verbal content when seeking to detect informant deception.

*Keywords:* Informants, Detecting Deception, CHIS, Smallest Space Analysis, HUMINT.

## **ADOPTING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A BESPOKE INFORMANT INTERVIEW MODEL**

In February 2003, the United States (U.S) Secretary of State stood before the United Nations Security Council and argued America's case for going to war with Iraq based on the Iraqi regime's apparent development of mobile biological weapons factories (Drogin, 2007; Lewis, 2013). During his speech, delegates were assured that their conclusions were, "...based on solid intelligence ... from human sources" (Drogin, 2007: p.157). The 'human source' in question was an Iraqi asylum seeker codenamed *Curveball*, and the 'solid intelligence' later proved to be a complete fabrication (Drogin, 2007; Jervis, 2006).

The *Curveball* case provides an extreme example of the kind of damage a deceptive human source can cause. However, rather than urging caution regarding the use of human sources, a review of the case for the war in Iraq concluded that the intelligence failure was not the result of an *over-reliance* on human sources of information, rather, it was due to an *under-reliance* on them, resulting in information from a single source being given too much credence (Secretary of State, 2005). The review recommended a greater use of human sources, coupled with an increased effort to detect deception (Secretary of State, 2005). The requirement to detect deception in domestic human source cases has also been acknowledged in a recent survey of law enforcement officers responsible for handling human sources (hereafter referred to as 'handlers'). The survey found that *detecting deception* was rated by handlers as their most important consideration, and the one which most required further research (Moffett et al., 2021). The current study therefore seeks to address the topic of detecting informant deception by examining the verbal content of accounts provided by truthful and deceptive participants in a mock-informant study.

### **Defining a Human Source**

Broadly, a human source could be any person who provides information to another organisation or agency (Coulam, 2006). Researchers have attempted to narrow this definition by distinguishing between intelligence interviews (designed to elicit information that can assist operational decision-making), and investigative interviews (which seek to obtain evidence for a criminal prosecution; Borum, 2006; Evans et al., 2010). This distinction places an emphasis on the interviewer's situational dilemma. An alternative distinction is to differentiate between an 'active' and 'passive' human source (see Moffett et al., 2021). A passive source obtains the information of interest passively and in the normal course of their existence of which *Curveball* is an example. *Curveball* was de-briefed by German authorities regarding his past experiences living and working in Iraq (Drogin, 2007). In such a situation, the passive

source is not aware that they will be de-briefed about target information at the time they obtain it. This is not the case with an active human source (such as a tasked informant) who adopts an active role in both the collection and disclosure of target information. Moffett et al. (2021) recognise that the UK Government's legal definition of a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) applies to active sources of information, encompassing tasked informants (Home Office, 2018). The definition of a CHIS also highlights that target information will relate to the actions or intentions of another person, as opposed to the informant's own behaviour or experiences. This is distinct from most other law enforcement interviews, which would usually be autobiographical in nature (Fisher et al., 1989), **especially those concerning suspects of crime, who expect to be interviewed about their own transgressive behaviour (Pearse, 2009).**

Consequently, the situational dilemma of an informant, as someone who is tasked to actively obtain and disclose information about the actions or intentions of someone other than themselves, is very different to that of a variety of other human sources of information. The survey conducted by Moffett et al. (2021) targeted handlers of active informants. It was they who rated detecting deception as their most important consideration and the one requiring further research, therefore, it is the situational dilemma of this type of informant that the current study considers.

### **Detecting Informant Deception**

There has been a growing body of psychological research over the last decade which could inform and assist informant handlers, including studies aimed at detecting deception (see Vrij & Granhag, 2014, for a review). However, much of this research has been fuelled by the experiences in the U.S and the interrogation methods employed at military bases such as Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib (Alison & Alison, 2017; Brandon, 2014; Intelligence Science Board, 2006). Consequently, much of the current detecting deception research relevant to this area simulates the situational dilemma of a resistant detainee (Evans et al., 2013; Jundi et al., 2013; Shaw et al., 2014). In many of these studies, the human source is interviewed about their own involvement in potentially criminal or terrorist related activity, albeit preparatory to the intended event, with researchers examining the efficacy of techniques designed to increase cognitive load.

The cognitive approach is predicated on the theoretical assumption that maintaining a lie is more cognitively demanding than telling the truth, and that the increased cognitive effort involved in maintaining deceit will elicit verbal or non-verbal cues to deception (Vrij et al., 2017). Research examining the cognitive approach in other forensic situations, such as interviews with criminal suspects, indicates that there may be benefits to adopting this strategy. Vrij et al. (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of the cognitive approach and found that in all but one of 14 studies it resulted in greater accuracy for detecting both truths and lies. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that researchers examining deception in intelligence interview contexts have, thus far, focussed their efforts on increasing cognitive load on

the interviewee. However, DePaulo et al. (2003) found that different situations produce different cues to deceit, and lies that do not concern a *personal* transgression, "...leave almost no discernible cues" (p. 104). Given that a deceitful informant will be providing an account about the **transgressions** of someone other than themselves, employing cognitive load techniques designed to elicit observable cues may not be the most successful strategy.

It is also worth considering the unique relationship between a handler and their informant. Dabney and Tewksbury (2016) conducted an observational study of interactions between police officers and informants and noted that despite the handler working for a governmental agency, the informant is in a relative position of power by virtue of the information they possess. Additionally, unlike many custodial settings, the interaction between handler and informant is both voluntary and confidential (Association of Chief Police Officers [now National Police Chiefs Council], 2007; Dabney & Tewksbury, 2016; Home Office, 2018). Consequently, the handler is not in a position to compel the source to disclose any information they wish to withhold (Kleinman, 2006). Therefore, handlers need to build and maintain lasting, long-term, rapport in order to elicit cooperation and information (Nunan et al., 2020; Stanier & Nunan, 2021) - something which results in a relatively informal interaction (Schirman, 2014; Storm et al., 2015; Yousef & Brackin, 2010). Considering the unique situational dilemma of an informant, the informal setting of meetings, and the need to balance other requirements, such as maintaining rapport and obtaining information (Moffett et al., 2021), the techniques espoused by the cognitive approach may, again, be inappropriate.

There are other theories though, such as Self-Presentational Perspective (SPP; DePaulo et al, 2003) and Interpersonal Deception Theory (IDT; Burgoon & Buller, 1994) which specifically consider the social and interpersonal aspects of deception. The SPP recognises that all deceit, regardless of whether it be a high stakes deception or a minor lie, involves the deceiver presenting a false version of themselves: "The realm of lying ... is one in which identities are claimed and impressions are managed" (DePaulo et al., 2003, p.76). IDT also acknowledges that deceivers will attempt to manage the impression they leave on their listeners, but additionally highlights their strategic awareness arguing that, "virtually all social interaction episodes can be characterised as purposive and goal-directed" (Burgoon et al., 2000, p. 108). Within IDT, deception is a motivated and strategic act, however, whilst deceivers may be conscious of their strategic aims, they may not be aware of their tactical or linguistic approach to deceit (Dilman, 2009). Consequently, rather than focusing on supposed cues to deceit, interviewers should attend to the verbal content of communication, an approach endorsed within the human source domain (Hazlett, 2006).

Taylor et al. (2013) conducted a study that may provide some insight into how truthful and deceptive informants might present themselves through the verbal content of their communications. Taylor et al. examined the effect of deception within a corporate espionage role-play with the goal of

comparing written reports provided by both loyal and disloyal employees. They discovered that disloyal participants used more words associated with increased self-focus and a lack of social connectivity when compared to loyal participants. **Because they were providing information to an outside organisation or agency**, the disloyal participants were deemed to be insider threats and **(from the employers' perspective)** were practicing a form of deceit. However, the situational dilemma of an informant is the reverse of this scenario – they are, in effect, the insider reporting on their associates to an **outside agency** (Coulam, 2006). Consequently, it is likely that greater self-focus and a lack of social connectivity would be representative of a truthful informant account **(from the handlers' perspective)**, and the opposite situation would represent a deceptive informant. Concepts of self-focus and social connectivity are similar to the two psychological constructs of potency and intimacy, which have successfully been used to determine narrative identity when profiling offenders (see Youngs & Canter, 2012). When interpreted along these two facets, Taylor et al.'s (2013) findings would indicate that the narrative account of a loyal informant would contain high levels of potency and low levels of intimacy, whereas a disloyal informant would express the opposite combination of low potency and high intimacy. **Consequently, an examination of varying levels of potency and intimacy may be useful when attempting to detect informant deception.**

### **Narrative Identity**

Youngs and Canter (2012) have used the concepts of potency and intimacy to explore an offender's narrative identity in conjunction with Smallest Space Analysis (SSA; Youngs & Canter, 2012; Youngs, 2013). Potency refers to an individual's sense of power, control, and mastery of their environment, whilst intimacy refers to their relations with others, the significance of these relations and the impact these relationships have on their actions and behaviour. The interaction between these two facets results in the enactment of one of four narrative roles: (i) a *hero's quest* is one where the narrator expresses high levels of both potency and intimacy; (ii) a *professional's adventure* has high levels of potency but low levels of intimacy; (iii) a *tragic hero's* account is one with low levels of potency but high levels of intimacy, and; (iv) a *victim's irony* expresses low levels of both potency and intimacy (Youngs & Canter, 2009; Youngs, 2013). Youngs and Canter (2009) refer to this as the Narrative Action System Model and argue that an insight into various narrative roles can assist in the interpretation of an SSA (Youngs, 2013).

Whilst SSA has been used extensively in offender profiling (Youngs, 2013) and is most commonly employed to categorise offenders on the basis of crime scene behaviours (i.e., Canter & Fritzon, 1998; Fritzon et al., 2014; Goodwill et al., 2013; Hakkanen et al., 2004; Mokros & Alison, 2002), SSA has also been used to successfully distinguish genuine suicide notes from simulated ones. For example, **Ioannou and Debowska (2014) conducted content analysis on both genuine and false suicide notes and found that content themes are, "...reflective of the psychological state of the writer" and are used to, "...construct ... narratives" (Ioannou & Debowska, 2014, p.157). Importantly, when subjected**

to SSA, there was an observable difference in content data between genuine and simulated notes (Ioannou & Debowska, 2014), indicating that SSA may be an appropriate form of analysis when attempting to identify deceptive narrative accounts.

### **Smallest Space Analysis**

SSA is a multi-dimensional scaling technique which can be used for visualising the distance between content data based on their (dis)similarity to each other (Ioannou & Debowska, 2014; Shye, 2014). Interpretation of the SSA output is inductive, with the mapped space being partitioned into regions based upon the relationships between the content components (Shye, 2014). The faceted approach to interpreting an SSA is based on the assumption that the content data entered for analysis includes only a limited sample of data which could be representative of a particular facet, and that the space between data points still makes up part of the facet content. When using SSA in conjunction with the Narrative Action System Model, the two facets of potency and intimacy would be expected to be evident in the data map, and the facet-content would be partitioned into regions representative of a quest, adventure, tragedy or irony narrative.

### **Current Study**

The authors conducted an SSA on accounts provided by both truthful and deceptive participants within a mock-informant paradigm to explore: (i) whether the two facets of potency and intimacy would be evident in mock-informant accounts, and; (ii) to establish whether narrative identity would be affected by deception. **We hypothesised that: (i) content data from a mock-informant account would reflect their narrative identity (represented by combinations of potency and intimacy); (ii) that this would be influenced by deceit, and; (iii) this would be observable through SSA.**

## **Method**

### **Design**

A between-groups design was used with participants being randomly allocated to one of four conditions: (i) truthful-suspect; (ii) truthful-informant; (iii) deceptive-suspect, and; (iv) deceptive-informant. Participants were allocated to the suspect / informant condition prior to the first experimental phase (mock-conspiracy) and were then further allocated to the second condition (truthful / deceptive) prior to the mock-interview phase. Only the informant condition (truthful and deceptive) has been analysed as part of the current study.

### **Participants**

**In total, N=44 participants took part in the study divided into 11 groups of four, with the mock-informant condition comprising N=22 participants (males n=12; females n= 10) with a mean age of 47.23 years (SD = 16.33), range 19 – 84 years. The remaining participants (N=22) performed the role of mock-**

**suspects.** Participants were recruited from the community, via email campaigns at universities, gyms, and recreational clubs with the consent of department heads / senior managers.

### **Materials**

A fictional case study<sup>6</sup> was used to stimulate a role play scenario. **Participants were informed that they were to attend a meeting with a group of animal rights activists to plan an ‘action’ at a pharmaceutical company warehouse. Mock-suspects were instructed to take a leading role in planning an act of minor criminal damage (graffiti), whilst mock-informants were instructed to show sufficient enthusiasm for the plan to maintain their cover without taking a leading role. Images and a map of the target warehouse (obtained from open-source searches) were provided to assist with the planning. Additionally, mock-informants were informed that they would be reporting the proposed plan to their handler following the meeting.**

### **Procedure**

Participants took part in groups of four and all provided informed consent before being shown into the laboratory. The room contained a table with four identical card folders and participants were asked to select one of these folders at random - each folder contained the role play stimulus outlining individual participant roles (mock-suspect or mock-informant). There was nothing to distinguish these folders in any way and the experimenter was blind to individual roles. Participants were instructed not to discuss their role with any of the other group members and were given 15 minutes to conduct the mock-conspiracy phase of the experiment.

After 15-minutes, the mock-conspiracy was brought to an end **and participants were given five minutes to prepare for an interview;** mock-suspects were informed that they had been arrested and mock-informants were informed that they would be de-briefed by a mock-handler. One participant in each condition was instructed to tell the truth about the mock-conspiracy, the other was told to lie, specifically, mock-informants were told to inform their handler that the group was planning a terrorist attack. Mock-interviews were conducted in alphabetical order **(by participant’s first name)** to ensure that the sequencing did not correspond in any way to the roles that had been allocated at random.

Mock-interviews were conducted using a script designed to reflect the PEACE model of interviewing (College of Policing, 2019). PEACE is a mnemonic of the five stages of the investigative interview model used in England and Wales (and many other countries) - **P**lanning and preparation,

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<sup>6</sup> The case study and **interview script** employed is available from the lead author on request.

Engage and explain, Account, clarify and challenge, Closure and Evaluation. All mock-interviews were audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed for analysis.

### **Analysis**

Mock-interviews were transcribed by the lead author, with an average number of words = 671.05 ( $SD = 372.25$ ). As analysis progressed, it became clear that one particular transcript (#4) was unsuitable for analysis as the participant did not understand the role play instructions and interacted with the interviewer out of role. Thus, the final analysis was conducted on 21 transcripts, with 10 truthful and 11 deceptive accounts.

Following the procedure utilised by Ioannou and Debowska (2014), we began with a Thematic Analysis (TA; Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the transcripts. TA is a method of organising qualitative data into thematic categories and is conducted over a series of six phases: (i) data familiarisation; (ii) generation of codes; (iii) searching for themes; (iv) reviewing themes; (v) defining themes, and; (vi) producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The lead author re-familiarised themselves with the data and organised it into segments of speech. An inclusive data-driven approach to coding was adopted (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with each segment of speech being coded in accordance with the idea(s) being expressed. **Consequently, a constructivist approach to coding was adopted, whereby the development of categories was based on the accounts of participants, rather than experimental preconceptions (Yin, 2014).**

Having conducted thematic coding, a tally chart was created for each individual transcript recording the presence or absence of each coded category within that transcript. This was then transposed onto a matrix, where the co-occurrence of each category was scored on a dichotomous scale (1 = both categories are present; 0 = no co-occurrence of categories). A master matrix was produced for the entire dataset whereby a higher score represented more occasions of co-occurrence and a lower score represented fewer occasions of co-occurrence (see Figure 1).

----- Figure 1 about here -----

This matrix was subjected to multi-dimensional scaling analysis using SPSS software ensuring that proximities were shown as similarities. A two-faceted approach was adopted for the interpretation of the SSA output, examining groups of categories in light of supposed levels of potency and intimacy.

## **Results**

### **Thematic Content Analysis**

Thematic analysis resulted in the categorisation of **content** data into three broad themes comprising several sub-themes as shown in Table 1.

----- Table 1 about here -----

**Main Theme 1 - Group**

This theme included any reference to the group, and included sub-themes of members, motives, cohesion and deception.

***Sub-theme 1a - Members***

This sub-theme included any reference to group members, including the size of the group, group hierarchy or an identified leader, the name of one or more group members, descriptions of one or more group members, or the roles that they undertook during the meeting or intend to undertake during the action, Narrative 18 provides an example (names have been anonymised):

Content	Code
Okay in my group there were four individuals including myself	Group size
there was a guy called ALPHA, somebody called BRAVO and somebody called CHARLIE	Names group members
just taken at face value the leader of the group seemed to be ALPHA erm who had a very clear idea about what needed to be done and when and how	Identified leader
backed up by BRAVO who seemed to have a very clear idea of erm what she thought needed to be done to back up what ALPHA was projecting CHARLIE said little erm but was clearly I think erm anti-violence and anti-erm doing anything too much untoward	Group hierarchy Role / intent

***Sub-theme 1b - Motives***

This sub-theme encompasses the group ideology, their specific or strategic aims and objectives for the intended action, or even the tactical concerns (i.e. the presence of security) which affect their planned action.

Content	Code
I attended this meeting for animal rights activists and what we're going to do is we're going to hit this erm it's like a er animal testing er warehouse	Group ideology Outlines aim / objectives of group

(Narrative 1)

***Sub-theme 1c - Cohesion***

This included references to any agreement or disagreement among the group, for example:

Content	Code
but the level of disruption that was going to be caused was a bit in debate erm so there were three different things really that got mentioned	Disagreement / cohesion

(Narrative 6)

***Sub-theme 1d - Deception***

Any references to the group practicing some form of deception (i.e., pretending to plan for a protest when they actually intend to commit a terrorist attack), were categorised under this sub-theme.

Content	Code
that's what they're going to say but the truth is they're going to take take erm explosives in there	Deception by group Violence

(Narrative 12)

**Main Theme 2 - Self**

This theme covered any topics where the mock-informant referred to themselves. Sub-themes include evaluation, self-reflection, as an informant, role for action, and emotional response.

***Sub-theme 2a - Evaluation***

Although evaluative remarks were made about the group, they were categorised as a sub-theme of *self* as they were the personal evaluations of the mock-informant. These evaluations were further coded as either *positive* (i.e., the group did something well) or *negative* (i.e., the group were confused or chaotic).

Content	Code
but it struck me that they haven't really decided what that thing was erm what their long-term aim was erm how they're going to do it and obviously there's three very different characters aside from me	Evaluation (Negative)

(Narrative 3)

***Sub-theme 2b - Self-reflection***

This refers to the mock-informant reflecting on their own performance during the meeting, gaps in their knowledge and possible reasons for why their knowledge might be incomplete, for example:

Content	Code
I think they decided that we'd meet at night time don't remember the time if time was eventually discussed it was that chaotic	Gap in knowledge Excuse for gap in knowledge

(Narrative 3)

***Sub-theme 2c - As an Informant***

This relates to the narrator either directly addressing their role as a police informant, or demonstrating an awareness of their role, either through the description of their thought process during the meeting, or of their actions and attempts to manipulate the meeting in alignment with their role. It also includes attempts to negotiate with their handler in their role as a mock-informant.

Content	Code
why did I refuse well as you know I am an undercover police officer so I can't I can't agree to this conspiracy and I certainly can't act as agent provocateur	Role as informant
so what I did say is right out in front of everybody that I weren't going to do it why should I be doing that they want me to buy all the paint even if I was just a normal member of the bloody public they want me to buy all the paint me to go over the fence and me to do the graffiti that isn't going to happen in a million years not a problem for me to say I'm not doing that I said if you want the paint go buy your own paint so erm they agreed to buy their own paint	Manipulation as informant

(Narrative 11)

***Sub-theme 2d - Role for Action***

This refers to the mock-informant outlining the task they had been assigned by the group:

Content	Code
I would be the driver	Role in Action

(Narrative 5)

***Sub-theme 2e - Emotional Response***

Whenever the mock-informant expressed an emotional response, either to their personal situation or dilemma as a covert police informant, or in response to the proposed action by the group, this was categorised as *emotional response*. Fear, concern, or feeling trapped were the emotions most commonly expressed:

Content	Code
Well look I'll be totally honest [inaudible] I'm quite worried about what we discussed at the meeting	Concern
don't know I think you know I don't want any kind of part really about	Reluctance / fear
the only thing is though is as the plan's evolved I've kind of become more and more entrenched in that	Trapped

(Narrative 2)

### **Main Theme 3 - Action**

This refers to any reference to the planned or proposed action which was discussed during the meeting. Sub-themes include pre-action, practicalities, post-action and event.

#### ***Sub-theme 3a - Pre-action***

This encompasses a list of phases which need to be undertaken in order to conduct the main event, such as reconnaissance, rendezvous, approach and gain entry. It also includes any planning phases, and any other preparation, such as sourcing vehicles, for example:

Content	Code
we agreed to meet in a pub there was a pub nearby just over the road I believe	Rendezvous pre-action

(Narrative 8)

#### ***Sub-theme 3b - Practicalities***

References to practical elements such as clothing, timing, equipment and the layout of the target premises, and any references to escape or exit strategies were included in this sub-theme.

Content	Code
early evening meet in this pub	Timing
wearing dark clothing	Clothing
and we were going to have a van with all the stuff in one of the gang was going to get some sturdy wire cutters	Equipment

(Narrative 8)

#### ***Sub-theme 3c - Event***

The sub-theme of *event* refers to the main event which was planned during the meeting. Four alternatives were coded, these were *protest* (i.e., banners), *publicity* (i.e., taking images or inviting press coverage), *damage* (i.e., graffiti), and *violence* (often acts involving terrorism / explosives).

Content	Code
what else erm oh yeah the plan is that if we can get the banners up glued on to the side of the building er at night then the plan is if that goes well to then return with the press the next morning er to get obviously publicity for the cause	Protest activity Publicity
(Narrative 7)	
Content	Code
get to the front and graffiti the whole place and then erm that would be all	Damage property
(Narrative 9)	
Content	Code
they're going to attack the warehouse	Violence
and they're going to kill anyone in sight	Murder / Violence
(Narrative 14)	

### Smallest Space Analysis

The themes and sub-themes were subjected to two factor multi-dimensional scaling. This accounted for 92.45% of the dispersion and returned a measure of Tucker's coefficient of congruence of .96. Lorenzo-Seva and ten Berge (2006) report that a Tucker's coefficient value between .85-.94 represents a fair degree of similarity, whilst anything above .95 represents a good degree of similarity. Thus, our measure was deemed acceptable. The distribution of thematic content can be seen in Figure 2.

----- Figure 2 about here -----

Adopting a two-faceted regional hypothesis, the interaction of high to low potency and high to low intimacy ought to result in four distinct regions, representing the four narrative identities of hero's quest, professional's adventure, tragic hero, and victim's irony (Youngs & Canter, 2012). A visual analysis of the SSA reveals that the x-axis can be interpreted as levels of potency, moving from high (left) to low (right), whereas the y-axis can be interpreted as intimacy moving from high (top) to low (bottom). This interpretation reveals a core of content themes which co-occur most frequently across all mock-informant narratives, namely, pre-action, practicalities and reflection. The combination of high potency and low intimacy results in the narrative identity of a professional. According to the SSA, this narrative identity would result in a co-occurrence of content relating to motives, publicity, protest, and post-action. The hero's identity, of high potency and high intimacy, would be expressed through the co-

occurrence of members, cohesion, negative evaluation and damage. The combination of low potency and low intimacy would be a tragic hero's account, and would contain content referring to violence, emotion and a positive evaluation. Finally, the victim's low potency and high intimacy narrative would contain the co-occurrence of content about their role in the action and their role as an informant as well as referring to group deception.

## **Discussion**

The aim of this exploratory research was to examine whether the two facets of potency and intimacy would be present in mock-informant accounts, and whether narrative identity would be affected by deception. Taylor et al. (2013) found that disloyal employees (i.e., informants) expressed more self-focus (high potency) and less social connectivity (low intimacy), and results of the SSA provide some support for these findings, indicating that mock-informants express a narrative role in accordance with the two facets of potency and intimacy.

There are also clear benefits to producing a visual common space map to distinguish between truthful and deceptive mock-informant accounts. Significantly, on immediate visual inspection, it can be seen that the themes of violence and deception both occur on the right half of the map (low potency) and are almost completely opposite the themes of damage and protest. This is highly indicative of the truthful / deceptive dichotomy. Not a single truthful mock-informant account contained content referring to violence or deception, and not a single deceptive one referred to protest. Only one (#19) referred to damage. Given Taylor et al.'s (2013) results, a deceptive account might be expected to be low in potency and high in intimacy, and the current study provides partial support for this. Whilst deceptive content co-occurs in low potency narratives, deceptive content occurred in both high and low regions of intimacy. These findings also lend support to theories of deception that predict deceivers will engage in impression management, in particular IDT, which posits that the particular objective of the deceiver will influence how they interact with, and present themselves to, the listener. This strategic approach is perhaps best evidenced by the fact that deceptive mock-informants did not embellish or exaggerate their own performance or ability (which would result in a high potency role), but that they presented themselves as powerless victims or tragic hero's, perhaps seeking to gain the sympathy of their listeners.

This may be further evidenced by the theme of emotion, which occurs to the right extremity of the map, and sits almost equidistant between both violence and deception, indicating the high levels of co-occurrence between deceptive content and emotional content. Previous research has also found more emotive content in deceptive accounts (i.e., Peace & Sinclair, 2012; ten Brinke & Porter, 2012; ten Brinke et al., 2012) and Peace and Sinclair (2012) postulate that deceivers use emotional content to distract the listener and to engage their sympathies. Also noteworthy is that content referring to motive was on the high potency half of the map, indicating frequent co-occurrence with truthful content. In their

study of mock-bomb hoaxers (vs. actualisers), Geurts et al. (2016) found that those who actually intended to carry out the threat included more *why* (or motive) details in their accounts. Findings from the current study therefore provide further indication that content referring to motive may be indicative of truth.

### **Strengths and Limitations of Study**

The current study represents exploratory research in an under-studied area and, like all such studies, there are caveats. We utilised a relatively small sample obtained in a laboratory environment, and it could be argued that the SSA is of limited value to practitioners as several of the content categories were specific to the mock-informant role-play. Whilst references to violence may be a very specific indicator of deceit in the particular scenario employed, the use of emotional content is not. Likewise, a focus on the subjects' motives are likely to be representative of a genuine, professional account regardless of the specific situation. Additionally, there is a danger that the SSA may represent an oversimplification of mock-informant narrative accounts. For example, not a single narrative contained all the content elements identified on the SSA as being indicative of a victim's account (deception, role for action, role as an informant), whilst one narrative (#8) contained all the elements of both a hero's account (damage, cohesion, negative evaluation and members) and a professional account (motives, protest, publicity and post-action). Consequently, in a 'real world' situation, it would prove difficult for a handler to examine thematic content of an informant's account and to accurately determine veracity. However, what the SSA does demonstrate is the importance of the two facets of potency and intimacy, and a qualitative analysis of narrative identity, examining overall expressions of these two facets, could be used to provide an indication of potential deceit, with low potency accounts being particularly indicative of possible deception.

A particular strength of this research is that it provides practitioners with a non-interventionary technique for detecting possible deception. Unlike the cognitive approach, the interviewer did not need to impose cognitive load on the informant, nor did they need to re-direct their own resources towards observable cues of deception. Given the unique relationship between handler and informant, it is foreseeable that this is especially beneficial within a handler-informant interaction. Additionally, findings tenuously suggests a link between deception, narrative role and verbal content. DePaulo et al. (2003) argue that all deception involves a misrepresentation of self, however, individuals are generally assumed to be motivated to present a positive image of themselves (DePaulo, et al., 2003; Hargie & Dickson, 2004). This assumption is not supported by the current study, with deceptive content occurring in low potency regions of the common space map, indicating that situational factors dictate how deception is practised (Burgoon & Buller, 1994). Therefore, it is a further strength of this research that a unique informant specific paradigm was employed, with participants being active not only in the dissemination of information (i.e., interview phase) but also in the collection of information (i.e.,

conspiracy phase). Consequently, this study provides a unique contribution to an under-researched area, with applicable implications for current practitioners.

### **Implications for Practice**

Practitioners have highlighted the importance of detecting informant deception (see Moffett et al., 2021; Secretary of State, 2005) and, to our knowledge, the current study is the first to manipulate deception within an informant-specific paradigm (i.e., whereby participants have been tasked to obtain information through the use of a personal relationship). Whilst further research is undoubtedly needed, practitioners should be advised to attend to both the content of the account and the narrative identity expressed by the informant, with highly emotive content and low potency accounts being potential indicators of deceit. Conversely, high potency accounts describing the subject's motives may be indicative of truth.

### **Future Research**

This is the first known study to use an active mock-informant role-play scenario to examine the effects of deception, and the first to examine the potential benefits of a narrative analysis approach. Future research should replicate mock-informant paradigms that are consistent with the legislative and operational context under examination, and should explicitly identify which operational situations their research seeks to replicate. This will serve to minimise practitioner confusion. Given the unique situational dilemma of an informant as an individual providing information about their associates in a relatively informal interview (compared to an investigative interview) researchers should consider the social aspects of an informant interaction, and how these are likely to impact deception. Findings from the current study highlight narrative identity and content analysis as potential areas of future research that might be able to inform practitioners handling active community-based informants, such as CHIS.

### **Conclusion**

This study directly addresses the concerns of informant handlers by devising a unique mock-informant paradigm to examine the effect of deception on informant accounts. This is the first known study to use an SSA to analyse the verbal content of mock-informant accounts, and we adopted a faceted approach to interpret the resulting common space map. Our approach was informed by impression management theories of deception (i.e., SPP and IDT) and previous similar research (i.e., Ioannou & Debowska, 2014; Taylor et al., 2013). Results of the current study can be used to provide practitioners with new insights into the communication strategies of their informants, and to provide academics with a new impetus to investigate this emerging area of research.

### **Declaration of Conflicting Interests**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## Interviewing Informants: Research Summary

*"Hence it is only the enlightened ruler and the wise general who will use the highest intelligence of the army for purposes of spying and thereby they achieve great results."*

— Sun Tzu, The Art of War

### Findings

- Handlers have to manage a range of complex and interconnected requirements, including building rapport, gaining cooperation, obtaining information and detecting deception;
- Informants communicate social information about their criminal associates in the form of gossip;
- Narrative analysis of informant interviews provides opportunities to identify levels of motivation, cooperation and possible deceit;
- When they lie, informants use emotional language to present themselves as a "victim" of their situation, or a "tragic hero";
- An alternative interview model can benefit practitioners across a range of objectives, including increased rapport and cooperation.

**Review and Research:** prior to interview review previous contacts with the informant and research any change in circumstances; any changes might indicate deceit.

**Welfare:** enquire about the informant's welfare at the outset of the engagement, and use this opportunity to build or re-establish rapport.

**Information:** prompt a gossip narrative by asking about individuals of interest and their social relations; probe their account using a narrative structure.

**Tasking:** provide tasks in the form of a story, emphasising the informant's role as a professional.

**Security:** demonstrate the informant's importance by providing them with suitable security measures.

**Understand Context:** post-interview, seek ways to corroborate or disprove the information; examine the informant's relationship to the person of interest; analyse their "narrative role" for signs of deceit.

**Sharing:** ensure the information is shared appropriately to inform the decision-making process.

Covert policing, including the use of informants (or Covert Human Intelligence Sources [CHIS]) has come under increasing scrutiny in recent years. However, despite the growing emphasis on Evidence-Based Policing, there remains little academic research that can assist practitioners and senior-leaders responsible for handling informants.

Of particular importance is the interviewing (or de-briefing) of informants. The current PEACE interview model is a flexible model that can be used to interview suspects, victims and witnesses; however, research suggests that informant handlers do not use this model when de-briefing CHIS (Nunan et al., 2020).

My PhD thesis explored the interaction between handlers and informants and developed a new bespoke informant interview model (RWITS-US, which can be remembered by the axiom: *Keeping Our Wits About Us*), to meet handler objectives.

### Recommendations

Record and transcribe interviews with informants  
 Conduct narrative analysis of informant interviews  
 Adopt the **RWITS-US** interview model for informant interviews

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# **BACK COVER**

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