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Interviewing and Interrogation Practices and Beliefs, 20 Years Later: A National Self-Report Survey of American Police

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Objective: This survey examined current law enforcement beliefs and practices about interviewing and interrogation to gauge whether they have evolved given the research and training developed over the past 20 years. ***Hypotheses:*** We hypothesized that police beliefs and practices would have evolved along with research findings over the past 20 years. ***Method:*** We surveyed 526 law enforcement officers about the practices and beliefs regarding interviewing and interrogation. We asked questions about officers' beliefs about rates of true and false confessions, time spent in the interrogation room, beliefs about their ability to detect deception, training experience, practices of recording interrogations, and their self-reported use of interrogation techniques. ***Results:*** Overall, when we compared our survey with Kassin et al.'s (2007) seminal survey, we found both similar results and evolving positive trends. The average interview was reportedly 1.6 hr, virtually no different from that in Kassin and colleagues' study. In addition, our sample reported that 26.2% of innocent suspects at least partially falsely confessed. Further, whereas Kassin and colleagues found that fewer than one in 10 interrogations were video recorded, we found that now more than half of interrogations are recorded in this way. ***Conclusions:*** In a geographically diverse sample of U.S. law enforcement officers, we found significant positive trends toward knowledge and practices informed by research generated over the past decades on interviewing and interrogation. Although causality could not be determined, these findings indicate an evolution of the U.S. law enforcement mindset in a more science-based direction.

Public Significance Statement
This survey found support for an evolving mindset of U.S. law enforcement officers regarding interviewing and interrogation beliefs and practices. We found that officers reported false confessions as more prevalent, recording of interrogations happened most of the time, and beliefs about deception detection showed a downward trend, compared with 20 years ago. All of these shifts are congruent with research on the topic and demonstrate a potential increase in awareness of the science.

Keywords: police, interviews, interrogations, confessions, survey

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The data are available on the Open Science Framework at https://osf.io/pd28m.

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Like the courtroom cross-examination, the police interrogation is a common trope in crime dramas and thrillers, often serving as the climactic confrontation between heroes and villains. The reality is much less dramatic. Yet until quite recently, researchers lacked an empirical understanding of how interrogations were actually practiced by American law enforcement. Starting in the 1990s, research began to gain some understanding of police practices through observations and analysis of actual interrogations (e.g., Leo, 1996); however, these studies were often limited by small sample sizes and aimed at examining the causes of false confessions (e.g., Leo & Ofshe, 1998). Building a comprehensive account of interrogation practices was further hampered by the sheer number and diversity of the nearly 18,000 law enforcement agencies in the United States (Banks et al., 2016).

It was not until the 21st century that Kassin et al. (2007), using a sample of American police investigators, provided a wide-ranging look into police officers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices about interrogations. The authors' survey focused on beliefs about (a) the prevalence of true and false confession rates; (b) frequency, length, and timing of interrogations; (c) lie detection ability; (d) recording practices; (e) the use of specific interrogation tactics; and (f) practices regarding Miranda warnings. Kassin and colleagues, whose sample consisted of 631 investigators from 16 police departments, reported, among several notable results, that interviews lasted on average 1.6 hr and were recorded 58% of the time, with only 8.5% being videotaped. Their participants also reported that false confessions were an apparently rare occurrence, with only 4.78% of innocent suspects confessing, along with a high estimation of their own lie detection accuracy (77%).

While this study became part of the scholarly record in 2007, data collection for it began in 2000, now more than two decades ago. Since then, American law enforcement has undergone profound changes, including a broad movement toward procedurally just and evidence-based policing practices (President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). Moreover, the interviewing field specifically has progressed in both research and practice. Many governmental entities have taken up reform initiatives for interrogation policies and practices in the United States (e.g., California Welfare and Institutions Code, 2021; Fallon et al., 2022). In addition, several government-sponsored science-based trainings for law enforcement were created and are now in practice. For instance, the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG), founded in 2009, developed an investigative interviewing model and funded training studies for both federal and local law enforcement to facilitate the dissemination of research and science-based practices to practitioners (Meissner et al., 2017; Russano et al., 2024). The Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) has also provided science-based training to federal and local law enforcement in the United States (https://www.fletc.gov/advanced-interviewing-law-enforcement-investigators). Both the HIG and FLETC trainings use an investigative interviewing model akin to the United Kingdom's PEACE model, which was developed and adopted in the 1980s after several high-profile incidents of false confessions (Bull & Soukara, 2010). The shift to science-based interviewing includes moving from a more accusatorial model to an information-gathering model. This evidence-based model aims to achieve cooperation through rapport, resulting in more detailed information while safeguarding from false confessions (e.g., Meissner et al., 2014).

These developments have seemingly altered the visible landscape of American interrogation practices. Yet it remains to be seen how, if at all, they have affected officers' attitudes and daily practices. To gauge whether, and how, beliefs and practices have evolved in the United States over the past 20 years, we surveyed American law enforcement officials, comparing our results with those of Kassin et al. (2007). We collected a more geographically diverse sample and focused on five of the same issues: (a) law enforcement's beliefs about their own ability to detect deception, (b) the amount of time spent in the interrogation room, (c) perceived rates of true and false confessions, (d) recording policy and practice, and (e) interviewers' use of accusatorial versus information-gathering tactics. Given that the significant impetus for research and training did not include any major legal overhauling of Miranda v. Arizona (1966), we did not include these questions.

We begin by reviewing the literature on confessions and how the research on false confessions has influenced interrogation models. We then address time spent in the interrogation room, deception detection, recording practices, and interrogation techniques. After this, we present our survey's methodology and results and finally conclude with the implications of our findings for theory and policy.

Rates of True and False Confessions

False confession research was a major impetus for much of the research on investigative interviewing. That is, without the knowledge of how traditional interrogation tactics can backfire, researchers and practitioners might not be aware of the necessity for better practices and the utility of testing their efficacy. Knowledge of the false confession phenomenon is arguably tied to a push toward more procedurally just policing and has prompted changes from accusatorial to information-gathering models in many government-funded training programs in Europe (e.g., PEACE, KREATIV; Bull & Rachlew, 2020) and the United States (e.g., FLETC and HIG trainings). False confessions are counterintuitive and at times a difficult phenomenon to believe (Kassin, 2017). Given this, awareness that they do in fact occur is important, especially for practitioners who might be able to prevent them from happening. This knowledge should further create a motivation to use techniques that carry a lower risk of provoking false confessions. Observational studies have established admission/confession rates overall, which vary across samples—for instance, Leo's (1996) early estimate of 64% in 182 interviews conducted at three different locations. However, despite their contribution to approximately 30% of wrongful convictions cleared through deoxyribonucleic acid evidence (Innocence Project, 2019), it is difficult to estimate the prevalence of false confessions. In experimental settings, false confession rates vary widely. For example, Schneider et al. (2021) found a 68.5% false confession rate in one experiment and 36.1% in a second experiment. Field survey data of inmates and individuals who were interviewed by the police found differing numbers as well—for example, a rate of 13.8% in European youths (Gudjonsson et al., 2009) and 22.0% in offenders who suffered from different mental illnesses (Redlich et al., 2010). In their original survey, Kassin et al. (2007) found that very few investigators (4.78%) believed that false confessions occurred. Given the expanding literature on false confessions, science-based trainings, and the influence of popular culture and social justice movements, we assessed beliefs about false confessions.

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Time Spent in the Interrogation Room

Except for the finding that long interrogations increase the likelihood of false confessions (Drizin & Leo, 2004), research on the length of interrogations has received scant attention. Some observational studies do note the length of interrogations in their samples. For example, Leo's (1996) seminal work inside the interrogation room found that 70% of the interviews in his sample lasted less than an hour, with the modal length being between 31 and 60 min. Cleary (2014) observed interviews of juveniles that were on average 65 min long. Finally, more recently, Kelly et al. (2016) coded a sample of interviews that were an hour and a half on average, closest to Kassin et al.'s (2007) self-reported length of 1.6 hr—a finding also reflected in the average length of interrogations reported by a sample of suspects (1.49 hr; Cleary & Bull, 2021). Observational studies of interrogations have also recorded maximum length, with false confession cases presenting an especially high average length (16.3 hr; Drizin & Leo, 2004). This was much higher than Kassin et al.'s participants' self-reported 4.21 hr and Leo's (1996) longest observations, 8% of which lasted more than 2 hr.

In a survey on rapport building practices, officers reported spending more time building rapport with suspects than with witnesses (Vallano et al., 2015). However, they did not report whether they believed that rapport building significantly increased the time spent interviewing. With the push for an investigative interviewing model that is less coercive and more rapport based, one concern might be that interviews will take longer. Indeed, when conducting an investigative interview, one seeks to gather as much truthful actionable information as possible while obtaining cooperation through rapport and not coercion (e.g., Brimbal et al., 2021). Without the ability to force a confession through maximization and minimization tactics (e.g., Horgan et al., 2012), an investigator may need to spend more time with a suspect to produce any kind of admission or confession. Thus, along with testing whether practices and beliefs have changed, we sought to investigate whether officers report an overall increase in time spent in the interview room.

Research on Deception Detection

Deception and its detection are two of the most studied topics germane to law enforcement interviewing and interrogation practices. With more than a century of documented studies on these topics (Denault et al., 2022) and several meta-analyses (Bond & DePaulo, 2006; DePaulo et al., 2003; Hartwig & Bond, 2011), the research is clear on two main points. First, there are few, if any, reliable nonverbal cues to deception (DePaulo et al., 2003). Second, lie detection accuracy is, on average, marginally above chance (54%; see Bond & DePaulo, 2006).

Nevertheless, Kassin et al. (2007) found that investigators reported that they were 77% accurate at detecting deception. A decade later, Miller et al. (2018) surveyed an international sample of investigators, which included 62 U.S. investigators. The U.S. investigators reported the highest rate of accuracy at 74.5%. This could be due to the continuing influence of traditional interview and interrogation trainings and their heavy focus on nonverbal behaviors as a means to distinguish lies from truths (Inbau et al., 2013; Jordan et al., 2019). And indeed, in the past, large portions of investigators (e.g., 83%–92% of samples; Meyer & Reppucci, 2007; Reppucci et al., 2010) have reported relying on body language observations to detect deception. The use of these tactics has led to erroneous judgments (see Vrij et al., 2006) and false confessions (Kassin, 2014) resulting in wrongful convictions (Drizin & Leo, 2004). Recent meta-analyses, as well as the research on causes of false confessions, inspired much research on how practitioners can more accurately detect deception. Such tactics actively provoke verbal cues to deception (e.g., Hartwig et al., 2014; Palena et al., 2021) instead of relying on passive observation of nonverbal behavior. In recent years, the knowledge generated by this research has been incorporated in science-based training disseminated to law enforcement (e.g., Luke et al., 2016; Meissner et al., 2017). Thus, in the present study, we assessed law enforcement's beliefs about their ability to detect deception.

Recording of Interviews and Interrogations

Researchers and activists have argued that many false confessions can be prevented by instituting a consistent practice of recording interrogations (e.g., Kassin et al., 2010; Leo & Richman, 2007). These arguments are bolstered by evidence suggesting that recording interviews does not affect other important interview outcomes. For example, informing suspects that they are being recorded does not seem to impact the likelihood that they will waive their Miranda rights or confess (Kassin et al., 2019). Given the lack of such problematic consequences, it is reasonable to expect that investigators have increasingly embraced recording interviews. This may be especially true given the rapid evolution of technology (Goldsmith, 2010) and laws mandating electronic recording (e.g., Gershel, 2010) in an increasing number of states (27 as of 2019—and possibly even more in the past few years—compared with nine in 2007; Sullivan, 2019). Hyman Gregory et al. (2023) found that 74% of their sample recorded their interviews with witnesses and victims electronically or via notes. Although 69% were audio recorded and only 50% were video recorded, this is still significantly higher than Kassin et al.'s (2007) 8.5% of suspect interviews. Yet Hyman Gregory et al. addressed interviews with witnesses and victims, which might be less scrutinized than suspect interviews. And indeed, Miller et al. (2018) found that only 47.5% of American investigators recorded their interviews. In addition, researchers who replicated Kassin et al.'s (2007) survey with a European sample of investigators found that fewer than 5% of their sample always recorded interviews (Schell-Leugers et al., 2023). Yet as the authors noted, there are no laws in Spain requiring recordings of interrogations, unlike in the United States. Our study's nationwide sample allowed us to assess how recording practices have changed in the United States since the early 2000s.

Research and Training of Interrogation Techniques

Much research has investigated false confessions and which interrogation techniques lead to false confessions (Drizin & Leo, 2004; Leo & Davis, 2010; Norris et al., 2019). Accusatorial tactics are typically aimed at obtaining a confession and have been linked to false confessions (Kassin, 2014). Advocates for reform have pushed for training to embrace an information-gathering approach that takes on a more investigative ethos, incorporating the interview as an information-gathering component in the investigation. The PEACE model, developed in the United Kingdom, is one of the first formal implementations of investigative interviewing models (Clarke & Milne, 2001). Building on this model, researchers have developed and tested a wide array of different techniques (e.g., Alison et al., 2013;

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Hartwig et al., 2014; Memon et al., 2010), some of which have been trained as part of efforts to translate research to practice and move interviewers toward less coercive and more effective methods (e.g., Brimbal et al., 2021; Luke et al., 2016; Rivard et al., 2014). On the one hand, survey research has found that training, especially in traditional methods (e.g., Reid), is associated with a higher likelihood of self-reported use of coercive techniques (e.g., Cleary & Warner, 2016; Kostelnik & Reppucci, 2009). On the other hand, training from science-based techniques such as the cognitive interview has shown promising results on important outcomes such as memory recall and information gain (Memon et al., 2010). Kassin et al. (2007) asked participants to report the frequency with which they used different techniques, most of which fell under the umbrella of accusatorial, with some of these (e.g., isolation, minimization) being reported as "most used" most frequently.

In our study, we tested whether research and training in science-based approaches have permeated law enforcement self-reported practices. We did this by surveying a large diverse sample of law enforcement officers from across the United States. We asked these officers questions about their practices and beliefs regarding interviewing to assess how these beliefs have evolved over the past 20 years.

Method

Sample

The Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training (ALERRT) Center at Texas State University, a national law enforcement training center, provided the research team with two samples. ALERRT has trained officers from more than 9,500 of the approximately 18,000 police agencies across the United States. The center was training approximately 40,000 officers each year when the samples were drawn. The sampling frame includes state and federal law enforcement agencies, local police departments, and sheriff's offices. Training at ALERRT is for both cadets and active sworn personnel ranging from new officers to executives. Agencies vary in who they elect to send to the center. Some agency training operations determine who attends the training, whereas other agencies will allow their officers to choose training opportunities to satisfy the training requirements for the year. ALERRT receives more requests for training than available resources can cover and strives to train new locations every year. Thus, it is unlikely that officers would be sampled twice. Texas mandates that all officers receive training through this center every 2 years, thus resulting in a larger sampling frame of officers from Texas. We provide our full results comparing officers working in Texas with those working in other states in the online Supplemental Materials.

Initially, ALERRT provided a random sample of 10,000 email addresses from a list of all 127,310 law enforcement officers who completed a training, unrelated to interviewing, between 2018 and 2020. Using Qualtrics, the research team sent an invitation to complete the survey, along with two reminders, between July and August 2022. Approximately 75% of the email addresses were operational, resulting in successful contact of 7,426 email addresses. To increase the number of participants, in November 2022, ALERRT included a link to the survey instrument in an email to course participants who recently completed training, again unrelated to interviewing. Course participants received a follow-up survey 3 months after completing training to gauge how the training has impacted their day-to-day activities. Course participants received a link to the survey instrument as well as a link to the posttraining survey. The instrument was successfully distributed to an additional 2,940 email addresses.

Of the total 10,366 successfully contacted email addresses, 961 officers elected to begin the survey instrument and 529 completed it, resulting in a response rate of 9.3% and a completion rate of 5.1%. It is important to note that response rates are not strong predictors of non-response rates (Groves & Peytcheva, 2008; Yeager et al., 2011). As well, there is no well-established survey response rate for police populations (Nix et al., 2019). The response rate was also comparable with those regularly found in social science research, such as surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center (see Keeter et al., 2017).

Participants

Of the 432 officers who did not complete the survey, 66% stopped after questions about interviewing experience. When comparing finished with unfinished participants, we found that those who finished had significantly more experience interviewing victims, witnesses, and suspects than those who did not. We hypothesized, on the basis of both observations, that most participants who did not finish the survey did so because they had little to no experience interviewing. Thus, given the importance of interview experience for our survey, we included only participants who reached the end of the survey in our analytic sample. Participants were also not required to respond to all questions. This resulted in sample sizes varying slightly across questions; thus, we included *n*s along with descriptive statistics. Our participants had extensive geographic coverage of the United States distributed across all U.S. regions and geographic divisions,[1] with 43 states and one territory (Puerto Rico) represented (see Table 1 for a breakdown).

Survey Instrument

Our survey instrument was based on the questionnaire developed by Kassin et al. (2007). Except for the subject of Miranda warnings, all original topics were included. We asked questions about rates of true and false confessions (four items), time spent in the interrogation room (three items), beliefs about deception detection (two items), training experience (three items), recording of interview and interrogation (four items), use of interrogation techniques (19 items), and demographics (13 items). A small proportion of the original items was edited or omitted entirely. Also, considering recent innovations in the field, we added a small number of new items. All changes are detailed below, and our full survey instrument is available via Open Science Framework.[2]

Demographics

Consistent with the original questionnaire, we asked participants to report their age, gender, race, ethnicity, and level of education. We also asked officers about their law enforcement experience—their number of years working in law enforcement, the number of

[1] https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2010/crime-in-the-u.s.-2010/aredefinitions

[2] https://osf.io/pd28m/?view_only=dce68a09077b4392b72efa3f784d95c9

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Table 1
Geographic Distribution for the Sample

U.S. state or territory	No. of participant	% of total
Alabama	11	2.14
Arizona	5	0.97
Arkansas	18	3.50
California	2	0.39
Colorado	7	1.36
Connecticut	2	0.39
Delaware	5	0.97
Florida	17	3.31
Georgia	27	5.25
Hawaii	14	2.72
Idaho	19	3.70
Illinois	6	1.17
Indiana	4	0.78
Iowa	11	2.14
Kansas	5	0.97
Kentucky	1	0.19
Louisiana	14	2.72
Maryland	15	2.92
Massachusetts	5	0.97
Michigan	10	1.95
Minnesota	2	0.39
Mississippi	12	2.33
Missouri	2	0.39
Montana	10	1.95
Nebraska	2	0.39
Nevada	1	0.19
New Hampshire	4	0.78
New Jersey	4	0.78
New York	35	6.81
North Carolina	2	0.39
North Dakota	1	0.19
Ohio	5	0.97
Oklahoma	9	1.75
Oregon	2	0.39
Pennsylvania	29	5.64
Puerto Rico	2	0.39
South Carolina	10	1.95
Tennessee	22	4.28
Texas	122	23.74
Utah	4	0.78
Vermont	1	0.19
Virginia	17	3.31
Washington	2	0.39
Wisconsin	16	3.11

Note. $N = 514$. There were no responses from Alaska, Maine, New Mexico, Rhode Island, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wyoming, or the District of Columbia. Two responses were dropped because participants indicated that they did not work in the United States. U.S. = United States.

interviews they had conducted, and their current position (not asked in the original Kassin et al., 2007, survey). In addition to asking a question about suspect interviews and interrogations (Kassin et al., 2007), we asked for the number of witness and victim interviews they had conducted as well as the proportion of juveniles interviewed. Finally, we asked participants to describe their agency—its type (federal, state, or local), its size, and in which U.S. state it was located.

Perceived Rates of True and False Confessions

Consistent with Kassin et al. (2007), we asked participants their beliefs about confession rates, both true and false. Specifically, we asked, "Considering all the interviews and interrogations in which you have been involved, approximately what percentage of [all suspects/suspects who were guilty/suspects who turned out to be innocent] acted in the following ways?" We also asked how many times they had personally observed an innocent person confess.

Time Spent in the Interrogation Room

We asked our participants the average number of times that suspects were interviewed, the average length of an interrogation session, and the longest interrogation session in which they were involved (see Kassin et al., 2007). Kassin et al. (2007) also asked participants what time of day interrogations occurred. They found that few interrogations happened when subjects might be most vulnerable to giving false confessions (Frenda et al., 2016)—late night (midnight to 4 a.m.; 11.67%) or early morning (4–8 a.m.; 5.67%). We omitted these items to decrease the overall length of the survey instrument and increase the likelihood that participants would fully complete it (Dillman et al., 2014).

Beliefs About Deception Detection

Participants were asked the extent to which they were skilled at knowing when a subject was lying.[3] We also included a question about what types of cues our participants relied on to tell whether someone is lying or telling the truth. Response options included verbal behavior (suspect's account), nonverbal behavior, available information/evidence, and an open-ended "other" response. With this question, we wanted to assess the prevalence of the belief that nonverbal behaviors were indicative of deception.

Training Experience

Given the hypothesis that training should have evolved within the past 20 years, we asked participants about their training and beliefs about training. Kassin et al. (2007) asked whether officers had received specialized training on how to conduct interviews and interrogations. Because most officers report receiving training on the job (Cleary & Warner, 2016), we expanded on the original question by asking the extent to which the following factors contributed to their interviewing style: "natural ability," "trial and error," "learning from a mentor," "learning from others," "formal training," and an open-ended "other" response. We also asked participants what, if any, formal training they had received in interviewing and who provided it. We included several trainings that are considered evidence based—including the cognitive interview (Rivard et al., 2014), FLETC, and the HIG—and others that are not (e.g., Reid), their academy training, and an "other" fill-in option. Finally, we asked how important our participants thought that it was that they receive training on evidence-based interview techniques.

[3] Kassin et al.'s (2007) question was positively valenced ("Now we want to ask you about how skilled you are at knowing if someone who denies guilt during an interview is lying. What percentage of the time has your impression turned out to be *right*?"). Because of an embedded question wording experiment in the survey, only about half of our participants received this version of the question.

Recording of Interviews and Interrogations

Consistent with Kassin et al. (2007), we asked participants whether their agency/jurisdiction requires that police–suspect interrogations be recorded. We then asked participants the nature of this requirement (video, audio only, or written), to estimate what percentage of their interrogations was recorded, and their opinions about whether interrogations and interviews ought to be recorded.

Use of Interrogation Techniques

Kassin et al. (2007) asked about a variety of techniques (e.g., maximization and minimization) that police officers sometimes employ. We included all techniques they did, except for using polygraph evidence. Because the use of polygraphs in court has become unfavorable (Murphy, 2016) and Kassin et al. found that this technique was very rarely used, we excluded it. Finally, we also added four techniques that surround the interview process and are consistent with science-based interviewing ("preparing the interrogation beforehand"; "a peer or supervisor reviewing your performance after the interrogation is over") and, more specifically, the cognitive interview ("encouraging the suspect to do most of the talking"; "trying to enhance the suspect's memory").

Results

Our results proceed in a series of stages, first examining the demographics of our sample and then moving through descriptive accounts of several aspects of interviewing and interrogation that were originally addressed by Kassin et al. (2007). We endeavored to make our results as directly comparable as possible with the previous study, and we draw points of comparison throughout. Although many of the items' response options did not allow for extreme outliers (e.g., closed-ended Likert-type scales, 0%–100%), a few items did have open-ended numeric responses (e.g., longest interrogation in hours) that could result in participants giving extreme or unlikely answers. Nevertheless, we did not observe any responses that seemed unduly influential to our overall mean estimates, so all responses were retained (Aguinis et al., 2013; Cortina, 2002). Because the measurements we compared are practically meaningful, we provide raw means and calculated percentage changes (Wilkinson, 1999). Finally, we replicated Kassin and colleagues' exploratory factor analyses of interrogation techniques to determine whether the use of certain techniques clustered together on common factors and subsequent ordinary least squares regression models using officer characteristics to predict the use of those clusters of techniques.

Demographics

As outlined in Table 2, our sample was on average 44.6 years old (*Mdn* = 44.0 years, range = 22.0–77.0, *SD* = 9.7), predominantly male (92%), White (76%),[4] and fairly educated (only 6% reported a high school degree or less). Our sample was quite experienced with the median category being 16–20 years in law enforcement and the modal category being 21 years or more. Most participants in our sample were local (68%) or state (19%) law enforcement officials, with a small percentage reporting that they worked for federal (5%) or other (8%) organizations (e.g., those serving special jurisdictions such as tribal lands, schools, airports, or parks). Most participants (51%) were from small agencies (between 1 and 99 officers). Most of our sample (67%) had participated in more than 100 suspect interviews, with only 4% reporting 10 or fewer.

Table 2
Demographic Descriptive Statistics

Variable	*n*	*M*/proportion	*SD*
Gender	500		
Female	38	0.08	
Male	462	0.92	
Race/ethnicity	492		
Non-White	116	0.24	
White	376	0.76	
Education	501	2.73	0.76
High school or less	28	0.06	
Some college	144	0.29	
College degree	262	0.52	
Graduate degree	67	0.13	
Age	492	44.56	9.65
Years of experience in LE	503	4.35	1.52
2 years or less	21	0.04	
3–5 years	42	0.08	
6–10 years	104	0.21	
11–15 years	73	0.15	
16–20 years	94	0.19	
21 years or more	169	0.34	
LE agency type	505		
Local	342	0.68	
State	94	0.19	
Federal	27	0.05	
Other	42	0.08	
LE agency size	504	2.59	0.83
1–9 officers	37	0.07	
10–99 officers	221	0.44	
100–999 officers	158	0.31	
1,000 officers or more	88	0.17	
Suspect interviews in LE career	503	3.74	1.13
1–10	19	0.04	
11–50	72	0.14	
51–100	74	0.15	
101–500	192	0.38	
500 or more	146	0.29	
Witness interviews in LE career	503	4.00	1.07
None	1	<.01	
1–10	15	0.03	
11–50	36	0.07	
51–100	81	0.16	
101–500	169	0.34	
500 or more	201	0.40	
Victim interviews in LE career	504	3.83	1.17
None	5	0.01	
1–10	18	0.04	
11–50	50	0.10	
51–100	84	0.17	
101–500	175	0.35	
500 or more	172	0.34	

Note. Twenty-one participants who indicated that they never interviewed a suspect were dropped. LE = law enforcement.

[4] Our sample is predominantly White and male. This is not representative of the U.S. population, but it is representative of American law enforcement officials (see Pew Research Center, 2017).

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Perceived Rates of True and False Confessions

We asked participants the extent to which they believed suspects confessed (see Table 3). Overall, participants reported that they believed that 65.44% of suspects provided either a partial or a full confession, slightly down from the 67.57% reported by Kassin et al. (2007; 3% decrease). Conversely, our participants reported that more suspects provided partial ($M = 38.49\%$) rather than full ($M = 26.95\%$) confessions. This mirrors the Kassin et al. findings for partial confessions ($M = 38.4\%$) but not for full confessions ($M = 30.0\%$, indicating a 10% decrease). Participants reported that they thought 34.56% of suspects did not confess, slightly up from the 32.14% reported by Kassin et al. (7.5% increase). Our sample indicated that 38.62% of guilty suspects provided partial confessions and 28.07% provided full confessions (compared with 40.24% [4% decrease] and 33.83% [17% decrease], respectively, in the Kassin et al., 2007, study). Importantly, our participants believed that 13.90% of innocent suspects provided a partial confession and 12.30% provided a full confession. Thus, our sample reported that 26.20% of innocent suspects provided some sort of confession, indicating a 12.5% increase from Kassin and colleagues' uncorrected mean (23.30%) and more than quadrupling from their corrected mean (4.78%). Throughout their study, Kassin et al. (2007) removed outliers to normalize the data (e.g., p. 392); however, they did not specify their procedures throughout. Thus, without exact instructions to replicate their procedures, we chose to simply compare both "corrected" (normalized) and "uncorrected" (including outliers) means with ours. Finally, the average number of false confessions that officers believed they witnessed was 2.95, similar to the nonnormalized mean in the Kassin et al. study (2.97) and more than tripling from their normalized response (0.71).

Time Spent in the Interrogation Room

Participants reported that interrogations lasted, on average, 1.61 hr ($Mdn = 1.5$ hr, range = 0–15, $SD = 1.17$, $N = 484$), which mirrors Kassin et al.'s (2007) 1.60 hr almost exactly. The longest interrogation was on average reported to be 3.88 hr ($Mdn = 3.0$ hr, range = 0.15–60, $SD = 4.09$, $N = 490$), which was slightly shorter than Kassin and colleagues' nonnormalized ($M = 4.95$ hr; 21.5% decrease) and normalized ($M = 4.21$ hr; 8% decrease) estimated longest reported interrogations. The number of reported interrogations per suspect was 3.09 ($Mdn = 3$, range = 0–10, $SD = 2.15$, $N = 502$), again strikingly similar to Kassin et al.'s 3.08 times that a suspect was interviewed.

Beliefs About Deception Detection

Participants self-reported their deception detection accuracy; on average, they believed they were accurate approximately 74% of the time ($SD = 21.78$, $N = 242$), which is somewhat lower than Kassin et al.'s (2007) reported estimate of 77% (a 4% decrease). When responding to what they use to tell whether someone is telling the truth or lying, the overwhelming answer was available information/evidence (53.28% of participants), followed by nonverbal behavior (23.66%) and verbal behavior (12.72%), whereas 10.34% of participants reported relying on other things (most commonly, a combination of some or all factors listed).

Training Experience

When asked what sources contributed the most to how they conducted their interviews, participants were provided five options to rate on 5-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *extremely*). The highest rated

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Other Characteristics

Variable	*n*	*M* (*SD*)/proportion	*Mdn*	Minimum	Maximum
Perceived lie detection accuracy (%)	506	78.60 (19.12)	80	0	100
Mean interrogation length (hours)	484	1.60 (1.17)	1.5	0	15
Longest interrogation (hours)	490	3.88 (4.09)	3.0	0.15	60
Mean interrogations per suspect	503	3.06 (2.15)	3	0	10
Overall suspects					
Partial confession	477	38.49 (19.91)	40	0	100
Full confession	477	26.95 (20.06)	25	0	100
No confession	477	34.56 (23.59)	30	0	100
Guilty suspects					
Partial confession	458	38.62 (21.45)	40	0	100
Full confession	458	28.07 (21.10)	25	0	100
No confession	458	33.31 (23.90)	30	0	100
Innocent suspects					
Partial confession	424	13.90 (18.25)	10	0	100
Full confession	424	12.30 (25.58)	0	0	100
No confession	424	73.80 (32.57)	90	0	100
Should interrogations be recorded?	500			1	2
Yes	478	0.96		0	1
No	22	0.04		0	1
Agency policy to record interrogations?	503			1	3
Yes	393	0.78		0	1
No	85	0.17		0	1
I do not know	25	0.05		0	1
Number of false confessions witnessed	506	2.95 (6.96)	0	0	60

Note. For confession rates, only participants whose responses summed to 100 are included. Twenty-one participants who indicated that they had never interviewed a suspect were dropped.

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response was "learning from others" ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.83$), closely followed by "learning from a mentor" ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.01$). These two sources were not significantly different from one another but were statistically significantly more common than the other sources. The lowest rated was "trial and error" ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.97$), followed by "natural ability" ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 0.90$). These two sources were not significantly different from one another but were statistically significantly less common than the other sources. "Formal training" ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.02$) was rated statistically significantly less common than others' influence (e.g., learning from others/a mentor) and statistically significantly more common than individual performance (e.g., trial and error and natural ability).

Participants were provided a list of prominent sources and asked to select where they had received interviewing and interrogation training. Participants reported receiving training from multiple sources: The modal category was local police academy training (78.06%), followed by training from John E. Reid and Associates (31.82%) and the cognitive interview (26.88%). Only a small percentage of participants (8.30%) indicated that they had received training from federal government sources such as FLETC and the HIG. Approximately 5% had received no training at all. See Table 4 for an exhaustive list of the trainings. We provide our full results comparing officers who reported receiving training at their academy with those who did not in the online Supplemental Materials.

Recording of Interview and Interrogation

In our sample, 393 participants (78%) reported that their agency/jurisdiction has a policy that requires police–suspect interrogations to be recorded in some format. This is more than quadruple the percentage reported by Kassin et al. (2007; 16%). Conversely, 85 participants (17%) said that their agency/jurisdiction does not have such a policy, whereas 25 (5.0%) indicated that they did not know whether their agency/jurisdiction had such a policy. Of the 393 participants who indicated having a policy, 384 answered a subsequent question about the nature of that policy. Most participants (275; 71.61%) reported that video recording was required, followed by 100 (26.04%) reporting that only audio recording was required. Approximately 1% reported that a written recording was required, and slightly more (1.30%) indicated that they did not know the nature of the recording requirement. Finally, participants were asked to separately estimate the percentage of all interrogations in which the following practices had taken place: The session was videotaped, the session was audiotaped only, a written record was kept, and the session was not recorded. The average estimated percentages for each practice were as follows: video (56.78%), audio (28.05%), written (2.49%), and none (16.04%). Participants thus reported that approximately 84% of all interrogations are recorded in some way, a substantial 42% increase from approximately 59% 20 years ago. As well, whereas Kassin et al. (2007) found that fewer than one in 10 (8.51%) interrogations were video recorded, we found that now more than half (56.78%) of interrogations are recorded in this way. When asked their opinion about interrogations being recorded, almost all participants (96%) said that they should be, up from 81% in 2007, indicating a more than 18% increase in the past 20 years.

Table 4
Training Distribution for the Sample

Type of training	No. of participant	% of total
Cognitive interviewing	136	26.88
FLETC	37	7.31
HIG	5	0.99
NICHD protocol	6	1.19
John E. Reid and Associates	161	31.82
Wicklander-Zulawski	41	8.10
Local police academy	395	78.06
Other	113	22.33
None	27	5.34

Note. $N = 506$. The survey item allowed the participant to check all that applied, so percentages do not sum to 100. Twenty-one participants who indicated that they had never interviewed a suspect were dropped. FLETC = Federal Law Enforcement Training Center; HIG = High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group; NICHD = National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

Use of Interrogation Techniques

To assess the variety of interrogation techniques that police use, and consistent with Kassin et al. (2007), we asked participants to estimate their frequency of use. We included 15 of the 16 techniques from the work by Kassin (2017) and included four additional techniques. Table 5 lists these techniques and corresponding self-reported frequencies of usage. When comparing our point estimates of the mean with those from the Kassin et al. (2007) study, we see certain similarities but also differences. Generally, our participants had lower means for most techniques. For example, we observed a 50% decrease in participants reporting "always" isolating suspects from 66% to 33%. Overall, the most highly endorsed techniques were science based, with "establishing a rapport and gaining the suspect's trust" ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.74$) being the highest reportedly used, followed by "identifying contradictions in the suspect's story" ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.75$). The third and fourth ranked techniques were consistent with the PEACE model: "encouraging the suspect to do most of the talking" ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.74$) and "preparing the interrogation beforehand" ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.02$).

Overtly coercive maximization techniques were reportedly used the least. More than half of the participants reported never "physically intimidating the suspect" ($M = 1.47$, $SD = 0.70$), followed by "threatening the suspect with consequences for not cooperating" ($M = 1.85$, $SD = 0.88$) and "expressing impatience, frustration, or anger at the suspect" ($M = 2.05$, $SD = 0.79$). The reported low rate of use of these traditional techniques is a positive sign, and it mirrors that of Kassin et al.'s (2007) survey. Furthermore, the techniques that are trained under the PEACE model and the cognitive interview (e.g., "trying to enhance the suspect's memory"; $M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.50$) were reportedly used at a frequency that was similar to that of minimization techniques (e.g., "minimizing the moral seriousness of the offense"; $M = 2.97$, $SD = 0.98$). Interrupting denials, a prominent step of the Reid technique (Inbau et al., 2013), was also reportedly lower in our sample ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 0.83$) than previously. Finally, a particularly problematic practice that has been linked to false confessions—the presentation of false evidence (see Perillo & Kassin, 2011; Snook et al., 2021)—was reportedly used less by our participants ($M = 2.67$, $SD = 0.92$) than by those in the Kassin et al. study.

Like Kassin et al. (2007), we conducted exploratory factor analyses using a Varimax rotation on the 19 technique variables to

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Table 5
Self-Reported Frequencies of Usage of Techniques

Interrogation technique	*n*	*M* (*SD*)	*Mdn*	% never	% always
1. Isolating suspect from family and friends	494	3.81 (1.16)	4.00	6	33
2. Conducting the interrogation in a small, private room	495	3.50 (0.99)	4.00	3	14
3. Identifying contradictions in the suspect's story	495	4.02 (0.75)	4.00	1	25
4. Establishing a rapport and gaining the suspect's trust	495	4.15 (0.74)	4.00	<1	33
5. Confronting the suspect with evidence of guilt	495	3.71 (0.74)	4.00	1	11
6. Appealing to the suspect's self-interests	495	3.48 (0.82)	4.00	2	8
7. Offering the suspect moral justifications and excuses	494	3.04 (0.93)	3.00	7	3
8. Interrupting the suspect's denials and objections	496	2.64 (0.83)	3.00	7	1
9. Implying or pretending to have independent evidence of guilt	495	2.67 (0.92)	3.00	12	1
10. Minimizing the moral seriousness of the offense	494	2.97 (0.98)	3.00	9	4
11. Appealing to the suspect's religion or conscience	494	2.54 (0.98)	3.00	19	1
12. Showing the suspect photographs of the crime scene or victim	494	2.71 (0.95)	3.00	12	2
13. Expressing impatience, frustration, or anger at the suspect	494	2.05 (0.79)	2.00	24	<1
14. Threatening the suspect with consequences for not cooperating	495	1.85 (0.88)	2.00	42	1
15. Having suspect take a polygraph and telling suspect he or she failed it					
16. Physically intimidating the suspect	494	1.47 (0.70)	1.00	63	<1
17. Encouraging the suspect to do most of the talking	495	3.91 (0.74)	4.00	1	18
18. Preparing the interrogation beforehand	495	3.84 (1.02)	4.00	2	30
19. Trying to enhance the suspect's memory	495	2.86 (1.05)	3.00	12	5
20. A peer or supervisor reviewing your performance after the interrogation is over	494	2.80 (1.08)	3.00	12	5

Note. Frequencies were derived from responses on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). As part of a separate study, participants were randomly assigned small variations in the wording for Techniques 1, 2, and 16. Results here are the summary statistics across variations. Twenty-one participants who indicated that they had never interviewed a suspect were dropped.

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determine whether certain techniques clustered together. These results are presented in Table 6.[5] The first factor analysis includes only the techniques included in the Kassin et al. study. In the first analysis, we identified two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00. These factors account for 88% of the variance. Seven of the items had factor loadings greater than .50. The first factor (which we label "Minimizing") accounted for 53% of the variance and included offering the suspect sympathy and excuses, appealing to the suspect's self-interest, appealing to the suspect's religion or conscience, and minimizing the moral seriousness of the offense. The second factor (which we label "Threatening") accounted for 35% of the variance and included physical intimidation, threats of punishment, and expressions of impatience, frustration, and anger.

The second analysis includes the original techniques and the four new science-based techniques. Here, we identified three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.00. These factors account for 92% of the variance. Seven of the items had factor loadings greater than .50. The first factor ("Minimizing") accounted for 40% of the variance and included providing justifications, appealing to self-interest, and minimizing, but it did not include appealing to religion or conscience or building rapport. The second factor accounted for 28% of the variance and, as in the first analysis ("Threatening"), included physical intimidation, threats of punishment, and expressions of impatience, frustration, and anger. The third factor ("Preparing") was not found by Kassin et al. (2007) and accounted for 23% of the variance. This factor comprises preparing for the interview and conducting the interview in a small room.

Three ordinary least squares regression models, one for each set of techniques, were estimated to examine whether participants' individual characteristics predicted use of each set. The outcome variables were produced by taking the mean index score across the techniques in that set, with higher scores indicating greater endorsement of that set. Consistent with Kassin et al. (2007), five predictor variables were included in each model: (a) experience, a categorical variable indicating the number of years the participant had served in law enforcement; (b) special training, a dichotomous variable indicating whether or not participants had received any additional training on interrogation or interviewing (beyond what was provided at their police academy); (c) confidence, a continuous variable (0%–100%) indicating the participant's perceived personal lie detection ability; (d) interrogations, a categorical variable measuring the number of interrogations conducted by the participant; and (e) length, a continuous variable measuring the estimated average length (in hr) of interrogations conducted by the participant. Table 7 presents the results of those regression models.

Model 1 was statistically significant, $F(12, 482) = 2.69$, $p = .016$, accounting for 6.3% of the variance in minimizing ($R^2 = .063$). The only statistically significant predictor was special training ($b = 0.191$, $p = .003$), suggesting that participants with additional interrogation training reported being more likely to use minimizing techniques than those who reported having no training or academy training only. Model 2 was not statistically significant, $F(12, 479) = 0.54$, $p = .885$, and accounted for only 1.4% of the variance in threatening ($R^2 = .014$). None of the predictor variables in this model were statistically significantly related to the self-reported use of the threatening techniques. Finally, Model 3 was statistically significant, $F(12, 476) = 4.42$, $p < .001$, accounting for 10.0% of the variance in preparing ($R^2 = .100$). Several of the predictor variables were statistically significantly associated with the

[5] To improve readability in Table 5, we shortened the full technique descriptions in Table 6 to single words or short phrases. To allow the reader to connect the longer technique descriptions to their short names, we included the technique numbering from Table 5 in Table 6.

Table 6
Cross-Loadings of Interrogation Items in Rotated Factor Solution

Technique	Factor Analysis 1: Original technique		Factor Analysis 2: All technique		
	Factor 1: Minimizing	Factor 2: Threatening	Factor 1: Minimizing	Factor 2: Threatening	Factor 3: Preparing
7. Offering the suspect moral justifications and excuses	**.69**	.12	**.68**	.12	.15
6. Appealing to the suspect's self-interests	**.62**	–.00	**.61**	–.01	.11
11. Appealing to the suspect's religion or conscience	**.51**	.17	**.51**	.16	.11
4. Establishing a rapport and gaining the suspect's trust	.38	–.14	.33	–.13	.33
1. Isolating suspect from family and friends	.17	.08	.16	.09	.16
10. Minimizing the moral seriousness of the offense	**.59**	.07	**.60**	.07	.08
3. Identifying contradictions in the suspect's story	.17	.06	.16	.06	.12
5. Confronting the suspect with evidence of guilt	.14	.05	.13	.05	.11
8. Interrupting the suspect's denials and objections	.22	.24	.25	.23	–.03
14. Threatening the suspect with consequences for not cooperating	.10	**.63**	.10	**.62**	–.02
16. Physically intimidating the suspect	.01	**.55**	.01	**.57**	–.02
13. Expressing impatience, frustration, or anger at the suspect	.06	**.58**	.07	**.57**	–.01
15. Having suspect take a polygraph and telling suspect he or she failed it					
12. Showing the suspect photos of the crime scene or victim	.16	.13	.13	.14	.28
2. Conducting the interrogation in a small, private room	.25	.03	.17	.06	**.58**
9. Implying or pretending to have independent evidence of guilt	.36	.44	.36	.43	.13
17. Encouraging the suspect to do most of the talking			.23	–.04	.25
18. Preparing the interrogation beforehand			.16	–.05	**.63**
19. Trying to enhance the suspect's memory			.09	.19	.14
20. A peer or supervisor reviewing your performance after the interrogation is over			.06	.05	.27
N	490		490		

Note. Factor loadings above .50 are bolded. Twenty-one participants who indicated that they had never interviewed a suspect were dropped.

self-reported use of the preparing techniques. Participants who reported having special training in interviewing and interrogation were more likely to report using these techniques ($b = 0.295$, $\beta = 0.175$, $p < .001$). Likewise, participants with longer average interrogation lengths (length) were more likely to report using these techniques ($b = 0.295$, $\beta = 0.120$, $p = .007$). Finally, regarding experience, compared with the reference category of the least experienced officers ("2 years or less"), all other categories of more experienced officers were more likely to use preparing techniques (see Table 7).

Table 7
Ordinary Least Squares Regression Models Predicting Interrogation Usage From Officer Characteristics

Variable	Factor 1: Minimizing			Factor 2: Threatening			Factor 3: Preparing		
	b	*SE*	β	*b*	*SE*	β	*b*	*SE*	β
Experience									
2 years or less (reference)									
3–5 years	–.235	.186	–.094	–.122	.168	–.056	.535*	.222	.176
6–10 years	–.193	.172	–.111	–.107	.155	–.070	.467*	.205	.221
11–15 years	–.038	.180	–.019	–.043	.162	–.025	.575**	.214	.239
16–20 years	–.068	.176	–.038	–.008	.159	–.005	.646**	.210	.298
21 years or more	–.164	.172	–.112	–.167	.155	–.129	.730***	.205	.412
Special training	.191**	.064	.137	.022	.058	.018	.295***	.076	.175
Confidence	.002	.002	.056	.001	.001	.032	–.001	.002	–.033
Suspect interviews in career									
1–10 (reference)									
11–50	.056	.186	.029	–.124	.168	–.072	.219	.222	.090
51–100	.173	.190	.087	–.118	.171	–.068	.174	.226	.072
101–500	.252	.180	.177	–.071	.162	–.056	.115	.214	.066
500 or more	.335	.184	.218	–.049	.166	–.037	.073	.219	.039
Length	.005	.026	.008	.004	.023	.008	.084**	.031	.120
N		495			492			489	
R^2		.063			.013			.100	

Note. Consistent with Kassin et al. (2007), special training is a dummy variable, confidence was measured using participants' perceived lie detection accuracy (0%–100%), and mean interview length was measured in hours. Factors 1–3 are the dependent variables. Twenty-one participants who indicated that they had never interviewed a suspect were dropped. *b* = unstandardized regression coefficient; *SE* = robust standard error; β = standardized coefficient.
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

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Discussion

Assessing police beliefs, attitudes, and practices regarding interrogation is crucial as policymakers and researchers continue to grapple with the role of police in democratic societies. Two decades ago, Kassin et al. (2007) provided an initial survey of American law enforcement interrogation practices and beliefs. Our study provides a snapshot of the state of U.S. law enforcement practices and beliefs today. We surveyed a large geographically diverse sample of law enforcement officers to examine how practices and beliefs regarding deception detection ability, confession rates, timing, recording practices, and use of tactics have changed since the early 2000s. We are encouraged by our findings in two ways. First, although this study was based on a convenience sample of American law enforcement officials, we found commonality between several statistics. Second, we saw differences between our findings and those of the original survey that may indicate positive trends and suggest that the American law enforcement approach to interviewing and interrogation may be evolving as more research informs the field (e.g., increased recordings of interrogations, increased reported false confessions, decreased ability to detect deception).

Twenty years later, we found almost identical results for average interview times, suggesting that there might be a certain amount of time necessary to reach a successful investigative outcome (~1.6 hr). Further, if there is indeed a shift in practices toward more information-gathering techniques, the similar interviewing times provide support for the idea that these practices do not increase the time of the interview. We also found that the number of times that a suspect was interviewed did not change, suggesting that certain procedures might be somewhat necessary (e.g., repeated interviews) and largely immutable. In addition, it might be logistically imperative for suspects to be interviewed several times, and in practice, three interviews are typical.

Regarding changes, participants' longest interrogation was on average 1 hr shorter than 20 years ago, suggesting an awareness of the risk of excessively long interviews. Our participants were also more aware of the false confession phenomenon, as illustrated by a 3% increase in officers' estimate of the percentage of suspects who falsely confess. This suggests an increased awareness that false confessions can occur. Although we hope that these changes are coming from research percolating into practice, there are many other potential reasons for this increased awareness—for example, exposure through popular documentaries (Sanchez, 2020).

We also found that although officers still believed that they were better than chance at detecting deception at around 74% (Elaad, 2009), beliefs about lie detection ability significantly decreased from Kassin et al.'s (2007) estimate, showing movement toward the benchmark 54% found by researchers (Bond & DePaulo, 2006) and an awareness of the fallibility of their own judgment. This suggests a trend toward scientific findings, although we cannot definitively link this alignment to increased science-based training or knowledge about research. Further supporting the improvement in judgments about deception in our sample, we found that most participants reported relying on information/evidence to detect lies. This is in line with science-based techniques such as the strategic use of evidence (see Granhag & Hartwig, 2015).

One of our most noteworthy findings is the high level of reported recording of interrogations. A large majority of our participants (more than 80%) reported that their interrogations were recorded in some fashion, with video being the most reported modality. Although it is likely that the significant increase in police recording of interrogations is the result of changes in policy addressing problematic practices, this could also be due to the increased availability of recording technology, a decrease in the cost of technology, officers' desire to protect themselves from false allegations of improprieties, or other unknown reasons. Although these trends are promising in themselves, future research could examine why these changes have occurred and what other changes are necessary.

Regarding tactics, establishing rapport and trust with the suspect, one of the main components of an investigative interview (see Brimbal et al., 2021), was the most endorsed technique. Also, whereas this technique loaded with the minimization factor in Kassin et al.'s (2007) sample, it did not load in ours—potentially indicating a growing understanding of the distinction between building rapport and minimizing (e.g., Kelly et al., 2019). The second most reportedly used technique was identifying contradictions in a suspect's story, which is also in line with science-based interviewing (e.g., Granhag & Hartwig, 2015). Furthermore, the third and fourth highest rated techniques were encouraging a suspect to do most of the talking, which is consistent with active listening (e.g., Alison et al., 2013), and preparing for the interview (Chin et al., 2022). When examining reported use of traditional techniques, the three least used were overt maximization techniques (i.e., threats, intimidation, and expressing frustration), consistent with the Kassin et al. results. Finally, two of the most problematic practices (i.e., interrupting denials and fabricating evidence; Snook et al., 2021) showed substantial decreases from the Kassin et al. survey. These changes could be a byproduct of improved training and practices (e.g., active listening) or awareness raised through the courts, which in certain states prevent the use of false evidence with juveniles (California Welfare and Institutions Code, 2023).

The present study was motivated by an interest in describing current police practices and beliefs and identifying whether they had changed in the wake of increased research and government supported science-based training (e.g., HIG, FLETC). To this end, we also surveyed our participants about the training they received. Building on the work by Kassin et al. (2007), who noted that their open-response question format may have lowered participants' ability to remember who trained them (p. 388), we provided options as well as an open-ended option. We found that the most cited response was officers' local police academy, with approximately three quarters of our sample reporting receiving training in that manner. This finding begs the question as to what those trainings entail, as not many differences emerged between officers who did and did not receive academy training. With a broad push for evidence-based policing (Sherman, 2013), the changes in beliefs that we observed could have been caused by resulting modification in academy curricula. The second most common response was Reid. However, it was closely followed by the cognitive interview, which is science based (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992; Memon et al., 2010). Finally, small numbers of participants reported being trained by FLETC and the HIG, the two main government entities with training that is informed by research. This indicates that these science-based interviewing trainings have not made many inroads in practice.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the present study provides a crucial revisitation of police officers' beliefs and practices regarding interrogation, it is not without shortcomings. Recall that Kassin et al.'s (2007) participants came from convenience samples of 16 cooperating police agencies, most of which were in California. In the present study, email addresses were randomly drawn from a list of all law enforcement officers who completed training between 2018 and 2020 with ALERRT, a national law enforcement training center. The resulting sample is much more geographically diverse, with participants hailing from 43 U.S. states and one U.S. territory as well as dozens if not hundreds of agencies. Nevertheless, while ALERRT has trained at least one officer from nearly half of all police agencies across the United States, its sampling frame is not equivalent to the universe of all police investigators in the United States. However, to our knowledge, no such database exists.

We did not receive responses from officers from seven U.S. states or the District of Columbia (see Table 1). Many of these states have small populations. Thus, we believe that lack of representation is due to a small sampling frame rather than something specific to each state's law enforcement culture. Our sample did have a large proportion of officers from Texas. However, when comparing Texan officers with non-Texan officers, no substantive differences appear (see the online Supplemental Materials). Nevertheless, future research should make efforts to conduct a probability sample of police officers from all U.S. states.

Relatedly, the officers in our sample freely elected to participate in the study; thus, we do not have a truly random sample from the ALERRT sampling frame. Therefore, the generalizability of our results to all U.S. police investigators should be treated with caution, although no more so than virtually all studies of police officers that rely on self-report survey data (see Nix et al., 2019). While we have provided an important step forward, in the future, researchers should strive to conduct truly nationally representative surveys of police.

Our study shares other limitations with Kassin et al. (2007). For instance, we asked participants about the frequency of various interrogation practices and outcomes over their entire careers. It is unlikely that the participants have detailed memories of all of these events. Instead, participants likely relied on inferential strategies to estimate these frequencies (Tourangeau et al., 2000), which often reduce the accuracy of estimates. One way to address this issue would be to use shorter reference periods (e.g., "in the past 6 months"; see Schaeffer & Presser, 2003). We elected not to do this to keep our items as directly comparable as possible with those of Kassin et al. Future research should experiment with different reference periods for these items to see whether they yield equivalent results.

Another issue, common to both our study and the Kassin et al. (2007) study, is social desirability bias in reaction to sensitive topics (Tourangeau & Yan, 2007). This could lead participants to overreport the frequency of techniques and outcomes considered positive and underreport the frequency of those considered negative. This may be particularly salient considering that the sample consists of police officers, who are often skeptical of researchers (Loftus, 2009; Marks, 2004). Fortunately, anonymous online surveys such as ours provide protection from both researchers and peers and have been shown to yield more truthful responses than other modalities (Chang & Krosnick, 2009; Kreuter et al., 2008). Future researchers should seek to replicate our results and include certain questions that we omitted (e.g., Miranda, polygraph use, time of day), could continue to employ online survey administrations when assessing this hard-to-reach population, and could use techniques such as Bayesian truth serum (see Prelec, 2004) to increase the reliability of results.

Further, this study was a self-report survey with no corresponding measurements of actual behavior. Unfortunately, observational studies of U.S. law enforcement interviews are rare. Most recent studies either assessed the use of different tactics in the field and evaluated the effectiveness of evidence-based techniques (e.g., Kaplan & Cutler, 2022; Kelly et al., 2016; Kelly & Valencia, 2021) or assessed juveniles only (Cleary, 2014). Thus, it is difficult to relate our self-reported data to actual observation. However, several studies have successfully evaluated the effect of training evidence-based interviewing techniques on investigator interviewing practices (e.g., Brimbal et al., 2021; Russano et al., 2024; for a review, see Russano et al., 2019), showing that if officers are trained in science-based interviewing, interviewing practices and outcomes improve.

Although it is beyond the scope of this article, we hope that these encouraging data regarding an upswing in recordings of interviews might spur future research as these self-reported data are not necessarily in line with legislation. For example, Texas passed a law requiring recording of interviews relevant to all crimes (Texas; Sullivan, 2019), while New York requires recording of interviews relevant to certain felonies (New York Criminal Procedure Law, 2018). Yet 10% of our Texas sample ($n = 120$) and 15% of our New York sample ($n = 34$) reported that their agency/jurisdiction did not have a policy requiring police–suspect interrogations to be recorded. This could simply be because of a semantic inconsistency between our questions and the law, or the fact that we did not specify which types of interrogation should be recorded. Nevertheless, it could suggest misalignment between laws and implementation. Thus, future research should investigate the specifics of statewide recording mandates and how they are applied in the field.

Conclusion

Research, training, laws, and public opinion on interviewing and interrogations have evolved over the past 20 years. We surveyed a geographically diverse sample of U.S. law enforcement officers and, overall, found significant positive trends in self-reported practices and beliefs. For example, officers reported increased percentages of recording and video recording of interrogations, higher rates of reported false confessions, and decreased self-assessed ability to detect deception. Although we could not establish causality, our findings show a trajectory that converges with research findings. These findings suggest a trend of U.S. law enforcement adopting a more science-based mindset.

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