Urgent issues and prospects in reforming interrogation practices in the United States and Canada

Brent Snook 1*, Todd Barron 1, Laura Fallon 1, Saul M. Kassin 2, Steven Kleinman 3, Richard A. Leo 4, Christian A. Meissner 5, Lorca Morello 6, Laura H. Nirider 7, Allison D. Redlich 8 and James L. Trainum 9

1Department of Psychology, Memorial University, St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada
2Department of Psychology, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY, New York, USA
3U.S. Air Force (retired), Washington, District of Columbia, USA
4School of Law, University of San Francisco, California, USA
5Department of Psychology, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa, USA
6Legal Aid Society, New York, New York, USA
7Pritzker School of Law, Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois, USA
8Department of Criminology, Law and Society, George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, USA
9Metropolitan Police Department, Detective (retired), Washington, District of Columbia, USA

The current article presents a series of commentaries on urgent issues and prospects in reforming interrogation practices in Canada and the United States. Researchers and practitioners, who have devoted much of their careers to the field of police and intelligence interrogations, were asked to provide their insights on an area of interrogation research that they believe requires immediate attention. The submitted independent commentaries covered a variety of topics – from police recruitment, interrogation training, use of proper interrogation practices, and the treatment of confession evidence in court. Common concerns from the contributions pertained to the lag between scientific knowledge on interrogations and the application of such knowledge in the justice system, and the glaring disparity between the treatment of similar issues in the interrogation context versus other criminal justice contexts. A primary intent of this collection of commentaries is to serve as a resource pointing researchers in the direction of the fundamental areas that require immediate consideration and encouraging them to simultaneously pursue solutions to the overarching concerns that emerged from this project.

*Correspondence should be addressed to Brent Snook, Department of Psychology, Memorial University, St. John’s, NL A1B 3X5, Canada (email: bsnook@mun.ca).

DOI:10.1111/lcrp.12178
This journal has begun recently to focus on urgent issues and prospects within its scope. Part of the impetus for such special issues is to consider the direction in which research in various fields should be moving, by providing guidance and insights about fundamental problems in the field that require immediate resolutions and research. This collective action is warranted in areas where scholarly outputs are substantial and seemingly heading in varied directions; thus, periodically taking stock of what is known in a field and where research efforts should be placed can be a productive exercise. It is this frame of mind that led to the current project exploring issues and prospects in reforming interrogation practices in the United States and Canada.

The amount of research attention on interrogation-related police and intelligence practices has increased substantially over the past three decades. This body of research has contributed much knowledge about the causes and consequences of misunderstanding interrogation rights (e.g., Cooper & Zapf, 2008; Eastwood, Snook, & Luther, 2014; Rogers et al., 2010; Viljoen, Zapf, & Roesch, 2007), the situational and dispositional risk factors associated with false confessions (e.g., see Kassin et al., 2010 for a review), what works in deception detection (e.g., Hartwig, Granhag, Strömwall, & Kronkvist, 2006; Mann, Vrij, & Bull, 2004), how the way interrogations are presented to the public and legal professionals impacts how they are interpreted (e.g., Lassiter, Ware, Lindberg, & Ratcliff, 2010), beliefs about false confessions (e.g., Kassin, 2008), the impact of confessions on other forms of evidence and on jurors’ decision-making processes (e.g., Dror & Charlton, 2006; Hasel & Kassin, 2009; Kassin & Sukel, 1997; Marion, Kukucka, Collins, Kassin, & Burke, 2016), and the development of ethical, science-based practices that could be used to interview suspects and accused persons (e.g., Clarke, Milne, & Bull, 2011; Meissner et al., 2014; Milne & Bull, 2003; Shepherd, 2007; Walsh & Milne, 2008). It is this accumulated knowledge that has allowed for some meaningful reforms to the practice of police and intelligence interrogation. For example, the creation of the PEACE model of investigative interviewing in the UK and its international export, the decision in Canada and some US states to mandate recording of all police interviews, and the formation of the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group in the United States were made possible by the tireless efforts of researchers and practitioners to improve interrogation policies and practices (see Meissner, Surmon-Bohr, Oleszkiewicz, & Alison, 2017). However, progress is slow, and issues stemming from problematic interrogation practices abound. There is still substantial work to be done. There is an urgent need for researchers to unite to conduct research on the interrogation issues that most critically need resolution and to create a more collective approach to associated problems that need solving.

Given the current crisis of confidence in psychology (see Schmidt & Oh, 2016), one obvious urgent issue in this field is the need to ensure that broader concerns such as ensuring sufficiently powered replications, increasing statistical power in primary studies, conducting systematic reviews and meta-analyses of the field, focusing on confidence intervals, and enhancing the disclosure of methods are addressed in interrogation research; this will ensure that well-established and emerging research is beyond reproach. Aside from ensuring that past and emerging findings are robust, a concerted and sustained effort to mobilize this knowledge, by both the scientific and practitioner community, is required. To do this, we must ask, what reforms are needed immediately? Where should researchers put their knowledge mobilization efforts? What new research is needed to make these reforms happen?

One of the primary goals of this paper was to hit the pause button on research for a few short moments and reflect on the urgent issues in interrogation research that require immediate attention. Practitioners contributing to the issue were asked ‘As a practitioner,
what question/issue do you wish research would address to reform interrogation practices?’ and the academics were asked ‘In your view as a researcher, what is the most urgent, unsolved question/issue, in reforming interrogations?’. Contributors worked independently, but were informed of the areas being explored by others. Each submission to the current paper presents an urgent unresolved issue in the study of police and intelligence interrogations and is presented in no particular order. The authors also provide some guidance on where research and knowledge mobilization efforts ought to be focused. In some instances, fruitful lines of research are outlined briefly. The specific guidance outlined in the author contributions is followed by a summary of the central trends that emerged from these independent lines of thinking.

Commentary #1 by Todd Barron and Laura Fallon: Let’s start at the beginning: Linking police selection tools to interviewing performance

Perhaps the most fundamental component of police work is the ability to communicate well with people. Strong communication skills transcend much of what police officers undertake on a daily basis, whether it be a traffic stop, interacting with protestors, talking with a victim of crime, speaking in a first-grade classroom, crisis negotiation, engaging with marginalized groups, or dealing with stakeholders, government agencies, and organizational leadership. All of these interpersonal interactions require officers to have the ability to effectively and clearly provide and receive important information. Of relevance to this commentary, good communication is especially important for the development of competent interviewers. As outlined in the next commentary, qualities such as empathy, critical-thinking skills, and having a calm reasoned approach to problem-solving are also vital for effective interviewing. If we agree that these qualities are essential for interviewers to possess, how do we ensure that the officers possess those skills? Starting at the beginning seems like the obvious answer.

Police departments recruit on a regular basis, but it is unclear whether or not the assessment tools employed in the selection process attempt to identify the skills that are required to be an effective interviewer; and if they do, are those assessment tools effective? Do police selection processes aim to identify those with an aptitude for good communication or are they more focused on weeding out those with undesirable attributes? Further, in the zest to meet their recruitment targets, are police agencies overlooking the core skills required to be both effective and efficient to the benefit of the police and the public?

In the pursuit of reforming interrogation practices, many police agencies have implemented science-based, ethical interview training programmes in their organizations. In these training programmes, officers are taught how to effectively communicate with suspects to maximize information provision. Unfortunately, even when officers have been trained in ethical interviewing practices, we still see far too often examples of unethical interviewing that result in wrongful convictions or cases being dismissed due to the exclusion of evidence gathered unethically. It may be appropriate, in this scenario, to look at the bigger picture. Could it be that the selection process does not ‘select in’ candidates that have the required communication skills to be a good interviewer, as well as, to execute other day-to-day policing routines? This of course is not to suggest that all recruits lack these skills, only to say that they are may not be prioritized in the selection process.

To address this issue, police agencies ought to construct recruitment strategies that prioritize selecting recruits with skills that will help them succeed in all aspects of
their future career – interviewing included. Some research already exists outlining the knowledge, skills, and abilities that should be sought after by police recruiters, but more specific research pertaining to the core competencies required to succeed in specific areas of policing, like communication, seems warranted. Moreover, collaborations between police recruiters and researchers with the goal of constructing a more scientific recruitment process could help to bridge the gap between being selected as a police officer and actually being successful and useful to the organization throughout one’s policing career. Ideally, a combination of personality inventories, intelligence tests (including emotional intelligence), situational tests, and assessment centre tasks would be designed to evaluate the core competencies, like communication skills, that evidence suggests are essential for being an effective interviewer. However, it is not only important to construct science-based processes for recruitment, but also to ensure that the criteria used to select recruits are predictive of future success on the job. For instance, if a situational test is designed to assess recruits’ communication abilities, we must ensure that (1) it accurately distinguishes between individual proficiencies in communication and (2) those who score high on the test will succeed in communication-based tasks on the job, such as interviewing. Ideally, these assessment measures would be created to directly reflect the situations in which future police officers would find themselves, in order to obtain the most accurate assessment of the recruit’s aptitude for that task. In doing so, police organization should be able to select in individuals who are predicted to succeed at fundamental policing tasks like interviewing.

When the first author (Todd Barron) was involved in recruiting during his policing career, he was told by a superior officer that it is critical to choose good recruits, because each one selected would be a multi-million-dollar investment. Not only that, but also once someone is selected to become a police recruit and successfully completes the training process, it is very difficult to dismiss them if it is later discovered that the wrong choice was made. With this in mind, it is critical for police agencies to start at the recruitment stage to ensure officers with core competencies are selected as recruits, so that when the time comes to train new interviewers, those with the proper skills will be ready and waiting to learn.

Commentary #2 by Steven Kleinman: An interrogator for a new era: Toward an archetype of excellence

The research literature relating to the interrogative context has grown exponentially in the past decade. This superb scholarship has focused on the relationship between interrogator and subject, utility of various strategies, contextual factors shaping the process, and dispositional characteristics of the subject. In contrast, research into the characteristics of an interrogator that might be predictive of success in eliciting meaningful information has been limited.

While foundational work in this area has been completed (e.g., Bull, 2018), a comprehensive exploration of this key empirical question remains stalled. To be sure, such an enquiry would be multifaceted – and vexing. Are there specific attributes found across a broad sample of high performing interrogators? If so, are these states (i.e., transient qualities, such as such warmth or confidence, that emerge in certain circumstances) or traits (i.e., enduring qualities, such as patience and empathy, that might be an aspect of an individual’s personality construct)? Assuming there are
diagnostic qualities of high performing interrogators, this also leads to two additional considerations. First, can the adaptive qualities be selected for and/or the maladaptive qualities selected out through assessment protocols? Second, is it possible for the adaptive qualities to be developed through training?

A review of the literature, my personal operational experience, and the benefit of years of reflection lead me to propose three essential attributes that would enable an individual to consistently elicit greater information yield, constructively mitigate conflict, and discover truth within circumstances bounded by ambiguity and uncertainty. Not surprisingly, they fall into the three categories of human endeavour: feeling, thinking, and acting.

**Feeling – Empathy**

In the interrogative context, Alison, Alison, Noone, Elntib, and Christiansen (2013) identified empathy as a quality of skilled police interviewing, and its significance has been corroborated by a host of practitioners – from Sherwood Moran, a World War II interrogator who emphasized the importance of engaging prisoners on a ‘human-to-human level’ (Straus, 2003, p. 132), to contemporary American and international interrogators who highlighted the unsurpassed value of rapport-building tactics (Russano, Narchet, Kleinman, & Meissner, 2014). While perspective-taking is fundamental to promoting empathy, **perspective-getting** (Epley, 2015) is arguably more diagnostic of success in the interrogative context. This suggests a principle of highly effective interrogators might be, ‘Seek first to understand, then to be understood’ (Covey, 2017). Empathy is arguably the foundation of operational **accord** that is diagnostic in the elicitation of valuable information (Kleinman, 2006). Finally, the efficacy of relationship-building tactics informed by empathy has been well-established and is a central feature of the **information-gathering approach** to interrogation, an empirically grounded paradigm that consistently generates higher information yield than the more pressure-oriented **accusatorial method** (Woestehoff & Meissner, 2018).

**Thinking – Managing cognitive bias**

Operating from an exploratory mindset – an open-minded sense of intellectual exploration and the continuous refinement of mental models – can transform the interrogation process from one of relentless questioning into a search for verifiable truth. The effort then becomes a multifaceted form of **sensemaking**, a process of building reasoned forecasts from initial supposition (Weick, 1995). The construction of mental models that accurately reflect reality is always subject to the corroding effect of cognitive bias, which are not unlike optical illusions ‘in that the error remains compelling even when one is fully aware of its nature’ (Heuer, 2007, p. 111). With bias an incessant challenge, the intrepid interrogator must employ deliberate **debiasing strategies**. By measuring assumptions against a normative model, debiasing strategies can serve as a cognitive shield against an erroneous reframing of the available information (Soll, Milkman, & Payne, 2016). The interrogator who can leverage strategic patience – and avoid the natural proclivity towards anchoring bias – is far better positioned to productively navigate the complexities and seeming inconsistencies that are inevitable features of the operational landscape.
Acting – Adaptation

In conventional practice, interrogation has been approached in a linear fashion predicated on the expectation of order and predictability. The reality, however, is far different. The interrogation process is more meaningfully defined as a complex adaptive system where multiple agents (people) operate with emergent properties specific to the interaction of those agents while responding to cues that appear (and disappear) in the environment (Axelrod & Cohen, 2000). To work effectively within such a system, the interrogator must be adaptive, which in this context refers to the ability to embrace change – cognitively and behaviourally – in response to a rapidly fluctuating scenario (Obolensky, 2014). Strategically, adaptability introduces a much-needed degree of enhanced flexibility in thought and action that enables the interrogator to respond most favourably to both environmental cues and stressors (Osize, 2007). The adaptive interrogator is one who is relatively comfortable with ambiguity and thus more readily able to find meaning within confusing circumstances.

As behavioural scientists continue to work closely with practitioners to explore the psychological dynamics of the interrogative context, it is time for empirical research to serve as a mirror to capture the reflections of high performing interrogators as a consequential step towards a re-engineering of selection methodologies and training curricula.

Commentary #3 by James L. Trainum: How the police should respond to interrogation failures: Lessons from use of force

Police departments have a responsibility to train their officers adequately to deal with the challenges that they face frequently during their careers. This is especially true when it is foreseeable that such challenges may result in harm to another person. Failure to do so often results in lawsuits costing police departments millions of dollars. Use of force is one area where agencies often face liability issues. In response to training deficiencies in the use of firearms uncovered through lawsuits, agencies are often forced to review and modify training to prevent future occurrences. In addition to ensuring that an officer can hit a stationary target with some level of proficiency, most agencies also include extensive training involving real-life scenarios. These include training in other force options, ‘shoot, don’t shoot’ exercises, proper use of cover, and de-escalation procedures. This training occurs throughout the officer’s entire career to ensure proficiency and update the officer on the latest best practices. The officer is expected to adhere to their training when faced with the potential use of force.

Wrongful conviction cases like the New York Central Park Five and the Michael Crowe case in Escondido, California, show that police interrogation practices constitute another area of liability. The ability to extract accurate and complete information from suspects is one of the most important and most frequently used skill sets of an investigator, especially when compared to the use of their firearm throughout their career. Agencies in the United States overwhelmingly train their officers in the use of the accusatorial approach to interrogation. This approach was developed decades ago and has changed little over time. In short, the suspect is told by the interviewer that their guilt is certain and is offered ‘themes’ to help them justify their criminal behaviour. The overarching goal is to obtain a confession, as opposed to simply gathering information.

---

1 An example would be agencies that teach their personnel to keep their drawn firearm in a ‘tuck’ position (pointing down and close to the body) to prevent unintentional shootings from accidental discharges.
One study has shown that approximately 450 million dollars in payouts related to false confession cases have been awarded in US states with restitution laws for exonerees. This amount does not include payout from civil lawsuits. Scientific studies have revealed that these false confessions were the result of deficiencies in the accusatorial interrogation approach combined with confirmation bias, lack of supervision, and inadequate evaluation of the evidence contained within the confession.

Law enforcement’s response to the consequences of accusatorial interrogations has been far different from their response to inappropriate use of force lawsuits. Instead of leading to meaningful modifications to training and practices to prevent future occurrences, the problems uncovered through these lawsuits appear to have gone largely unaddressed. Though more efficient and less problematic approaches to suspect interviewing are available, most agencies continue to use an unmodified accusatorial approach. Moreover, even those training organizations who claim to have acted to address these issues on paper do not appear to be doing so in practice. For example, in a recent session of a popular accusatorial interrogation training programme, the instructor is quoted as saying, in contrast to the written material, that ‘there really isn’t anything you can say to the average innocent person to convince them to say they did something they didn’t’. Additionally, many accusatorial interrogation training programmes do not provide a means to ensure a student’s proficiency, not only in their basic concepts, but also in the safeguards and cautions they promote in their written material. These practices in the interrogation field can be equated to firearms training consisting only of the officer being told how to shoot a gun, with little to no instruction on safety, the appropriate use of force, or discretion, no tests of the officers’ abilities in any of these areas, and being told things in training that do not align with written policies.

One way to overcome this shortcoming may be for attorneys who defend law enforcement agencies against liability claims to take an active role in reviewing their agencies’ interrogation training. Case studies that focus on interrogation training compared to its application in the field from a risk management viewpoint could not only lead to a decrease in civil liability, but also could improve the quality of investigations. Another way to address this issue is for social scientists to isolate the factors that contribute to the differential treatment by police organizations of failures in interrogations and use of force incidents. There are likely many reasons for this differential nature of responses in the two scenarios; for example, it could be a matter of the different weight placed on the consequences of each type of failure, the pressure from the public and organizational and community leadership, or the immediacy of the impact of the failure (e.g., immediate death of a citizen vs. miscarriage of justice that may only be discovered a decade later, if at all). Results of this research can then be used to educate leadership within police organizations regarding any mistaken beliefs they may have about the differences between the two scenarios.

Commentary #4 by Allison D. Redlich: Interrogating in the shadow of trial

It has been said that the goal of an accusatorial interrogation is to obtain a confession (Jayne & Buckley, 2014). The goal, however, is not merely to obtain a confession, but to obtain one that is admitted into court and ultimately leads to a conviction. To achieve this
goal, law enforcement has developed ‘tricks of the trade’ that judges rely on, which in turn, serve to validate their use in the interrogation room.

The Reid Technique of Interrogation, the most notable ‘brand’ of interrogation in the United States, states that the goals of an interrogation are to ‘elicit the truth and obtain a court-admissible confession if it is believed that the suspect is guilty’ (Jayne & Buckley, 2014). How do interrogators ensure confessions are court-admissible? For one, using the Testimony Data Sheet, law enforcement is trained to document if and when suspects were given food, water, breaks, and so on (Inbau, Reid, Buckley, & Jayne, 2013). They may also ask suspects on the record if they were treated well or that they were not threatened or promised anything. Such documentation makes it difficult for suspects to claim later that they were treated poorly or coerced. A NY State Police Bureau of Criminal Investigation training presentation recommended asking a series of Post-Confession questions, the stated purpose of which is, ‘to demonstrate to the court that the defendant was still willing to talk with police after the confession. This substantially detracts from the defence posture that the defendant was coerced!’ (emphases present in original text; available from author upon request). Relatedly, Reid personnel recommend interrogators complete Subject Data sheets (during the interview phase), which include questions like, ‘In the last 24 hr, how many hours of sleep did you have?’. One purpose of this sheet is to document ‘important information that may later be useful to refute some challenges to the validity of a confession during a suppression hearing’ (Inbau et al., 2013, p. 140). Finally, interrogators are trained to include ‘intentional errors for correction by the confessor’ (p. 317) and to have suspects to correct errors by initialling in their own handwriting. This act of correcting serves to increase the appearance of voluntariness and/or reliability.

These law enforcement tricks of the trade are only the first part of the equation. The second part is the judge, the gatekeeper who decides whether the confession should be heard by the jury. In untold number of decisions to admit questionable confessions, judges have pointed to the fact that the suspect was allowed to rest, given a smoke break, or that the interrogation door remained open. For example, when declining to suppress the confession of Khorey Wise, one of the Central Park Five and a known false confessor, the judge stated, ‘Wise slept, ate, and was given milk when he requested it’ (Leo, Drizin, Neufeld, Hall, & Vatner, 2006, p. 500).

But are these markers appropriate or accurate indicators of voluntariness and reliability? For approximately 80 years, interrogators have used psychologically oriented interrogation techniques to obtain confessions (Leo, 2008). The metrics law enforcement and courts rely on, however, are largely physical in nature. Take food and water for example. These are basic needs that should be met, especially since laws on the length of interrogations are lacking, but food/drink can also be used as interrogation tactics. Classic psychological experiments have consistently demonstrated the power of reciprocity – one seminal study found that participants given a Coke were twice as likely to purchase raffle tickets, regardless of whether they liked the person (Regan, 1971).

Interrogators interrogate in the shadow of trial by documenting the same indicators of voluntariness and reliability that judges rely on when evaluating confession evidence. However, while markers such as sleep and receipt of food are informative and should not be ignored, they are likely to merely scratch the surface of true feelings of voluntariness. Social scientists need to better understand the factors that underlie suspects’ and judges’ perceptions of voluntariness and custody. Interrogation tactics that are used to simultaneously produce confessions and indicate free will also need to be identified so as to disabuse judges and other triers of fact that receipt of food, breaks, and rest are not equivalent in and of themselves to voluntary admissions of guilt.
Commentary #5 by Saul M. Kassin: False evidence ploys that lead innocent people to confess

Investigators using the Reid technique or other confrontational approaches to interrogation are trained in various forms of subterfuge. Believing they can divine truth and deception, enabling them to distinguish between perpetrators and innocent suspects, these interrogators commence a guilt-presumptive process by making accusations, refusing to accept denials, and confronting suspects with evidence of their guilt, whether or not such evidence exists. John Reid and Associates claim that this ruse does not put innocents at risk (Inbau et al., 2013). In this view, they are both ignorant and incorrect – and just about every research psychologist knows it.

Historically and universally, confession is considered the ‘King’ or ‘Queen’ of evidence. In courts, in plea negotiations, and in the public eye, confessions are powerfully persuasive. Contradicting commonsense, however, innocent people sometimes confess to crimes they did not commit, often with tragic consequences. That’s what happened to the Central Park jogger defendants in 1989. It is what has happened to countless others wrongfully convicted and incarcerated. Hence, researchers have identified both dispositional (e.g., youth, cognitive impairment, psychological disorders) and situational factors (e.g., length of interrogation, false evidence, minimization themes that imply leniency) that pose this risk (see Gudjonsson, 2018; Kassin et al., 2010; Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004).

In Frazier v. Cupp (1969), the U.S. Supreme Court made it lawful for police to elicit confessions by outright lying to suspects about evidence. ‘The victim’s blood was found on your pillow’, ‘You failed the polygraph’, ‘Your fingerprints were on the knife’, ‘Your hair was found in the victim’s grasp’, and ‘Your friend said she wasn’t with you at that time’ are some common examples. There appears to be no limit to the type or magnitude of deception that is permitted, even to an anxious and unwary teen suspect. In the New York case against Marty Tankleff, who was traumatized by finding his parents lying unconscious in pools of blood, the interrogating detective told the 17-year-old boy that his father had regained consciousness in the hospital and implicated him in the assault. Hearing this lie (his father remained comatose and died shortly thereafter), Tankleff lost his grip on reality, broke down, and confessed (Firstman & Salpeter, 2008).

In most of the world (e.g., England, France, Germany, Spain, New Zealand, Australia, Japan, Taiwan, and all of Scandinavia), police are not permitted to deceive suspects in this way. Yet in some countries (e.g., Unite States, China, and Israel), this tactic is routinely used. In one astonishing illustration, seen in the Netflix documentary, Shadow of Truth, Roman Zadorov, a Russian émigré and suspect for the murder of a girl in Israel, was interrogated for several days. At one point, detectives tell Zadorov that the victim’s blood was found on his toolbox and clothing. ‘Impossible’ was his response. Yet that night, he was video recorded in jail, confused, asking his cell mate if police can make up evidence. ‘No they wouldn’t do that’, he said. ‘This isn’t Russia!’ That cell mate was an undercover detective, in place to bolster the deception.

What follows is an overview of the relevant behavioural science indicating that this tactic can produce false confessions. Consistent with real-world cases, this research consists of (1) basic psychology rooted in the studies of perception, memory, decision-making, and social influence; (2) controlled laboratory experiments that specifically tested the false evidence effect on confessions; and (3) indications of general acceptance within the scientific community.
Basic psychology
Across a range of non-forensic domains, it is clear that misinformation renders people vulnerable to manipulation. For example, experiments have shown that false information – presented through confederates, counterfeit test results, bogus norms, false physiological feedback, and the like – can substantially alter a subject’s visual judgements (Asch, 1956; Sherif, 1936), beliefs (Anderson, Lepper, & Ross, 1980), social perceptions (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971), behaviours towards other people (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968), emotional states (Schachter & Singer, 1962), self-assessments (Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991), memories for observed and autobiographical events (Loftus, 2005), ‘memory blindness’ for one’s own past feelings (Urban et al., 2019), and even certain medical outcomes, as seen in the classic placebo effect (Benedetti, 2014).

False confession experiments
Numerous laboratory experiments specifically demonstrate the false evidence effect. In the first ethical paradigm for eliciting false confessions, Kassin and Kiechel (1996) accused college students typing on a keyboard of causing the computer to crash by pressing a key they were instructed to avoid. Despite their innocence and initial denials, subjects were asked to sign a confession. In some sessions but not others, a confederate said she witnessed the subject hit the forbidden key. This latter manipulation increased the number of students who signed a confession from 48% to 94%. A subsample of those who confessed also went on to internalize the belief in their own culpability.

Using this paradigm, follow-up studies replicated the false evidence effect even when the false evidence manipulation consisted of a mere nonspecific bluff (Perillo & Kassin, 2011), even when the confession was said to bear a financial consequence (Horselenberg, Merckelbach, & Josephs, 2003), and especially among vulnerable populations such as children and juveniles (Candel, Merckelbach, Loyen, & Reyskens, 2005; Redlich & Goodman, 2003) and sleep-deprived adults (Frenda, Berkowitz, Loftus, & Fen, 2016).

This effect has also been produced using vastly different methods, leading innocent subjects to confess to cheating, in violation of a university honour code (Perillo & Kassin, 2011); stealing money from the ‘bank’ in a computerized gambling experiment (Nash & Wade, 2009); and recalling past transgressions, including acts of violence (Shaw & Porter, 2015; also see Wade, Garry, & Pezdek, 2018; for a meta-analysis of false confession experiments, see Stewart, Woody, & Pulos, 2018).

Consensus in the scientific community
In the light of the foregoing literatures, it is not surprising that the scientific community is in agreement regarding the risk of false evidence. In 2010, the American Psychology-Law Society (AP-LS) published a White Paper, which addressed this issue, reflecting the opinion of its members (Kassin et al., 2010; for a description of the consensus-building process, see Thompson, 2010). Shortly thereafter, the American Psychological Association (2014) passed a resolution ‘recommend[ing] that law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and the courts recognize the risks of eliciting a false confession by interrogations that involve the presentation of false evidence’. In a recent survey of 87 Ph.D. confession experts from all over the world, 94% endorsed as reliable enough to present in court the proposition that ‘Presentations of false incriminating evidence during interrogation increase the risk that an innocent suspect would confess to a crime he or she did not commit’ (Kassin, Redlich, Alceste, & Luke, 2018).
To sum up, evidence of misinformation effects on human behaviour and decision-making – including false confessions – is broad, pervasive, and generally accepted. At this point, more research is needed to examine a secondary question: Whether judges and juries are sensitive to (1) the persuasive effects of false evidence on both guilty and innocent suspects, and (2) the procedural fairness of an interrogation process in which police use this tactic.

Commentary #6 by Christian A. Meissner: Addressing resistance and developing an effective model of suspect interviewing and interrogation

Much has been learned from cases of wrongful conviction resulting from false confessions, including the influence of dispositional characteristics that render certain individuals more vulnerable to interrogation and the powerful role of accusatorial interrogation tactics that psychologically manipulate a subject’s perception of the evidence and the consequences associated with confession (Kassin et al., 2010). Decades of scholarship on the psychology of interviewing and interrogation have begun to shift policy and practice surrounding suspect interviews, most notably in countries such as the United Kingdom, Norway, Australia, and New Zealand. The PEACE model of investigative interviewing, originally developed in England and Wales (Bull & Soukara, 2010), was designed to replace the use of accusatorial interrogation tactics with an information-gathering approach that consisted of, among other practices, effective questioning skills (Griffiths, Milne, & Cherryman, 2011), memory-enhancing techniques such as the Cognitive Interview (Fisher & Perez, 2007; Memon, Meissner, & Fraser, 2010), and a humane, rapport-based approach to interviewing (Vallano & Schreiber Compo, 2015). Research has demonstrated that such an information-gathering approach to suspect interviewing can significantly reduce the likelihood of false confessions (see Meissner et al., 2014).

The shift from an accusatorial to an information-gathering approach in suspect interviewing has also begun to influence policy and practice in other countries around the world (Bull & Rachlew, 2019; Walsh, Oxburgh, Redlich, & Myklebust, 2016). North America is no exception to this movement – although accusatorial practices remain prevalent across the continent, aspects of the PEACE framework have become popular in Canada (Snook, Luther, Quinlan, & Milne, 2012), and leading interrogation training companies in the United States (e.g., Wicklander-Zulawski, John E. Reid & Associates) are now offering non-accusatorial suspect interviewing courses. A recent U.S. government research and training programme led by the Federal Bureau of Investigation has also begun to develop and assess science-based alternatives to customary practice (Brandon et al., 2019; Meissner et al., 2017). Although much progress has been made, I believe that two key research issues remain if we are to truly establish a viable alternative to customary practice.

First, we must develop a scholarship on understanding and mitigating suspect resistance. Despite positive movement towards an information-gathering approach to suspect interviewing, North American investigators have remained quite reticent to relinquish their use of accusatorial tactics. Why? Discussions with professionals over the past decade suggest one primary reason: they believe that information-gathering approaches are ‘soft’ and ill-equipped to effectively deal with a suspect’s resistance (cf. Snook, Eastwood, Stinson, Tedeschini, & House, 2010). Indeed, we are often asked by investigators whether they can revert to accusatorial practices ‘when’ information-
gathering approaches fail to elicit a confession. In this context, it is critical that the research community both (1) develop a theoretically informed framework for understanding the motivations that underlie a suspect’s resistance and (2) identify effective mitigation strategies that can promote cooperation, enhance information exchange, and prove diagnostic with respect to distinguishing innocent and guilty subjects.

Second, we must develop and assess a more complex and adaptive model of interrogation. Much of the current research literature is analogous to the Indian folk tale of the *Blind Men and the Elephant*. In reductionist fashion, we conduct studies on various elements of investigative interviewing and interrogation: developing rapport and trust, eliciting memories, presenting evidence or information, assessing credibility, sometimes within special populations or unique investigative contexts (see Meissner, Kelly, & Woestehoff, 2015). While it is important to understand the efficacy of such tactics for achieving what are best described as sub-goals of a suspect interview, we must also work to understand how the constituent phases and objectives of an interview connect if we are to truly develop an effective model. Frameworks such as PEACE offer a temporal and linear perspective on investigative interviewing. Unfortunately, suspect interviews are anything but linear (e.g., Kelly, Miller, & Redlich, 2016) – they require the dynamic application of tactics corresponding to various phases and sub-goals of an interview that are likely to interact in a complex manner. It will be critical for scholars to understand how various strategies and tactics can be leveraged across the cycle of cooperation and resistance that is often seen in suspect interviews. Further, we must work to evaluate such complex models both with respect to their efficacy in controlled laboratory contexts and their effectiveness in real-world contexts and training environments.

In closing, I would be remiss if I did not urge scholars to pursue a positive, collaborative relationship with professionals (Evans, Houston, & Meissner, 2012; Meissner, Hartwig, & Russano, 2010). Over the past decade, I have been granted many opportunities to work with law enforcement, military, and intelligence professionals on a variety of projects. In each case, I have learned a great deal from these individuals and their insights have always enriched our scholarship. Such relationships require patience, opportunities for trust-building, displays of mutual respect, and a willingness to learn from one another. Though challenging, these engagements will surely improve our research and increase our impact.

**Commentary #7 by Richard A. Leo: Full electronic recording of police interrogations**

Perhaps the most fundamental, and still arguably the most important, reform of police interrogation is the full electronic recording of each interview and interrogation from start to finish (Leo & Richman, 2007). Full electronic recording is the most fundamental reform because it merely preserves a factual – objective, comprehensive, and reviewable – record of what occurred during an interrogation for third parties (police managers, prosecutors, defence attorneys, judges, juries, and expert witnesses) to subsequently review and evaluate as they each play their respective roles in the investigative and adjudicative stages of the criminal justice process. It is arguably the most important reform because without a record, there is simply no way of objectively knowing what actually occurred during a disputed interrogation that created disputed confession evidence and may lead to a disputed conviction. At best, human memory is incomplete, selective, and prone to bias and error; at worst, litigants intentionally distort, exaggerate, or misrepresent what
occurred during an unrecorded interrogation leading to disputed confession evidence. For example, a recent study by Kassin and colleagues found that when police made reports from memory about what occurred during unrecorded interrogations, they frequently made errors, omitted information, and understated their use of several controversial and/or problematic interrogation techniques, such as false evidence ploys and implied promises of leniency (Kassin, Kukucka, Lawson, & DeCarlo, 2017). Without an objective factual record to evaluate the interrogation and confession, the criminal process will be rife with factual error and incomplete information that will continue to lead to more unjust and erroneous case outcomes (National Registry of Exonerations, 2020).

There are two foundational problems for which the full recording of interrogations provides an irreplaceable safeguard against unjust and/or false convictions: police interrogation coercion and police interrogation contamination. Without a full recording of an interrogation, there will inevitably be a ‘swearing contest’ in which both sides (police and suspect) assert a different narrative of who said what in the interrogation room. Empirical research shows that in such swearing contests, trial courts typically credit the police version of what allegedly occurred (Leo, 2008). In innumerable cases, this has led trial judges to treat as ‘voluntary’ confessions that were, in fact, coerced and thus should have been suppressed but were nevertheless admitted into evidence against the defendant and contributed to his conviction. Trial courts instinctive tendency to credit the police version of events in swearing contests over unrecorded interrogations has also led juries to mistakenly treat confessions that were contaminated (i.e., the police fed non-public crime facts to the suspect, who regurgitated them in his confession) as corroborating a defendant’s guilt because they allegedly contain details ‘only the true perpetrator would know’ (Garrett, 2010). Police interrogation coercion and contamination during unrecorded interrogations have led to numerous unjust convictions of the guilty and false convictions of the innocent, and many of these wrongful convictions could have been prevented had the disputed interrogation been recorded in its entirety.

There are many other benefits to requiring police to record interrogations – as approximately half of the 50 states do in one form or another – from start to finish (Bang, Stanton, Hemmens, & Stohr, 2018): It promotes transparency, accountability, and best practices (Simon, 2012); it deters police interrogation misconduct; it deters false claims of police impropriety; it creates the conditions for more efficient and effective interrogation (e.g., investigators do not need to take notes during questioning); it aids police in interrogation training; it cuts down unnecessary court time (e.g., not necessary to have police and suspects testify about what occurred during interrogation); and it helps prosecutors facilitate reliable plea bargains and secure convictions, among other things (Leo, 2008). At the same time, empirical research indicates that full electronic recording of police interrogations does not inhibit suspects from confessing or even influence their behaviour (Kassin, Russano, Amron, Hellgren, & Kukucka, 2019). The cost–benefit analysis of adopting mandatory electronic recording of the entirety of police interrogations – as has been occurring in England and Canada for decades – is a no-brainer.

Importantly, however, research indicates that police must fully record using a dual-camera approach that provides an equal focus perspective, showing both the interrogators and the suspect in order to contextually convey the situational influences of the interrogation process and minimize biased assessments of voluntariness and guilt (Lassiter et al., 2010). Nevertheless, there remains much to be researched on the effects of full electronic recording of interrogation (e.g., how it influences the decision-making of judges in suppression hearings and jurors at trial), the most effective electronic recordings
(e.g., image size, presentation speed, recording quality), and how recording affects or combines with other safeguards (e.g., Miranda warnings, jury instructions, and expert witness testimony) to contribute to more just and accurate outcomes in disputed confession cases (but see Blandon-Gitlin & Mindthoff, 2019).

Commentary #8 by Laura Fallon and Brent Snook: Implied messages in the justice system: The pragmatic implication paradox

It is generally accepted that interrogators in Canada and the United States are prohibited from using explicit threats or promises to obtain confessions from suspects; they are seen as obvious inducements that make it difficult to determine if the confession was voluntary (i.e., whether the will of the subject had been overborne). By contrast, implied threats and promises (known as minimization and maximization tactics in the interrogation literature) are generally accepted by the courts. Research has shown us, however, that there is actually little difference in the way that explicit and implicit promises (and explicit and implicit threats) are interpreted in a police interview setting (e.g., Kassin & McNall, 1991; also see 50+ years of research on the effectiveness of social influence strategies, Gass & Seiter, 2015). Some research has directly linked these subtle implied tactics to false confessions in an experimental setting, much like their explicit counterparts (e.g., Russano, Meissner, Narchet, & Kassin, 2005). One theoretical explanation offered for these findings is that minimization and maximization pragmatically imply promises and threats, respectively (Kassin & McNall, 1991). Pragmatic implication, broadly, occurs when a statement or message causes an individual to infer something that is not explicitly stated (e.g., ‘I ran up to the doorbell’ may imply that the speaker rang the doorbell; Harris & Monaco, 1978). Despite this research, courts in North America still allow police officers to use minimization and maximization tactics (see Arizona v. Fulminante, 1991; R. v. Oickle, 2000).

Granted the acceptability of implicit threats and promises in a police interview context, support for the use of implied tactics is not widespread within the legal system. R. v. Barros (2011) was a landmark case in Canada regarding the elements that constitute extortion. The defendant was a private investigator who discovered the identity of the police informant responsible for his client’s arrest. The investigator then brought that information to the police in an alleged attempt to get them to drop the charges against his client. On the stand, the police officer involved in this exchange testified that he assumed the defendant was asking the police officer to drop the charges to stop him from revealing the informant’s identity, despite the fact that the defendant did not ask for this explicitly.

According to Canadian case law, to be convicted of extortion it must be proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendant (1) induced or tried to induce someone to do something, (2) used threats, accusations, menaces, or violence to do so, (3) did so with the intention of gaining something, and (4) did so for no reasonable justification or excuse. One of the main issues in this case was whether a veiled threat, like the one issued by the defendant, would be sufficient to constitute extortion. The Supreme Court of Canada ruled that subtlety does not preclude an individual from being convicted of extortion. They stated that in the case of extortion, a veiled, subtle, or implicit threat may constitute a threat if it sufficiently conveys undesirable consequences to the victim. In other words, a subtle threat will be taken as a real threat if the person at whom it is directed recognizes it as such. In making this determination, the court must consider what a reasonable person in the position of the victim would understand.
In short, veiled threats or promises were deemed as sufficient to fulfil the second requirement for a conviction for extortion, mainly because it was clear to the court that any reasonable person would be able to understand what was being implied. This ability of victims to read between the lines is likely due, in part, to pragmatic implication. If this is the case, then we are faced with a paradox: While the court can recognize the impact of implied threats and promises on victims of extortion, they do not recognize the potential of the exact same tactics when used by a police officer against a suspect. In the former case, provided the other requirements for a conviction are met, the perpetrator will be punished accordingly, while in the latter, the interviewing officer will likely be praised for his interviewing acumen and the suspect could be convicted based on the information provided in response to the interviewers’ tactics.

The law is in place to govern the behaviour of citizens in a given society. One would expect, then, that there would be consistency within the law when it comes to the behaviours that are and are not permitted. Knowing that the aforementioned paradox exists, it is imperative that research is conducted to determine why this is the case. Admittedly, there are some instances where the courts are viewing veiled messages from police interviewers the same as direct messages (see *R. v. Wabason*, 2018); but this opens up additional questions about why a lack of agreement exists within the interrogation context and the factors that influence judicial decision-making around whether or not implied and direct messages are equivalent. As a start, social scientists need to continue to study the role of pragmatic implication in the justice system. But more than that, we need legal scholars to provide insight into why this paradox exists and how it can be resolved. Defendants are being convicted based on confessions extracted using the same tactics that are prohibited in other areas of the justice system; thus, it is apparent to us that reform is imperative to ensure parity and fairness throughout the justice system.

Commentary #9 by Lorca Morello: Bringing PEACE to America: Showing and telling

Even though I have been doing criminal defence appeals in New York for over 20 years, I can never get used to the way courts almost invariably ignore coercive interrogation tactics. No court is likely to deny in principle that when the government seeks to punish an individual it must ‘produce evidence by its own independent labours, rather than by the cruel, simple expedient of compelling it from his own mouth’, (*Miranda v. Arizona*, 1966), or that the Constitution prohibits the use of coerced confessions, ‘even those that are probably true’ (*People v. Thomas*, 2014).

But, in practice, courts seldom find a confession involuntary. Not even when the suspect was sleep-deprived, in pain, intoxicated, mentally disabled or subjected to hours of relentless questioning. Not even when the police used lies and tricks to get it. Instead, courts typically beg the question by concluding that none of this is ‘so fundamentally unfair as to deny due process’. As long as the suspect is given Miranda warnings and a Coke, almost nothing short of waterboarding is enough to render a confession involuntary.

Why this disconnect between principle and practice? One explanation is that most American courts are unaware of any alternative to the traditional interrogation whereby the suspect is presumed guilty and the objective is getting him to admit it. Or, as one court put it, ‘encouraging an obdurate suspect to abandon his false claims of innocence’ (*People v. Sobchik*, 1996). Under this view, the only choice is between leaving crimes unsolved or
condoning methods that in any other context would be considered coercive and unethical.

But one alternative is the PEACE model of investigative interviewing that focuses on gathering reliable information from the suspect while eschewing coercion and deception. Although PEACE is used by law enforcement in a number of countries including the United Kingdom, it is practically unheard of in America.

The research community ought to make the PEACE model better known, for instance by producing a video or series of videos using both actors and clips from real PEACE interviews to demonstrate how it works. The format could be similar to the videos produced by Reid and Associates, to demonstrate their interrogation methods. The PEACE video would similarly demonstrate how ethical and effective interviews ought to proceed, supplemented by a narrative explanation. The reason I think a video demonstration is so important is that it is hard to fully envision, from descriptions alone, how different PEACE is from traditional accusatorial interrogations and why PEACE is more effective. If judges, lawyers, police, and the public could see how this alternative works, they might well start to question the old methods. In addition to making those videos available to educate legal professionals, social scientists should study the effect that presenting videos depicting PEACE interviews would have on attitudes towards interrogation practices. For example, it would be interesting to see the effect of exposure to a video of a science-based interview model (vs. no exposure) on the evaluation of various interrogation models (e.g., accusatorial, hybrid models). Moreover, social scientists ought to conduct studies that aim to determine the most effective way to mobilize knowledge about PEACE and its benefits.

As Buckminster Fuller once said, if you want people to cross a river, you can either preach at them or build a bridge. A demonstration of the PEACE model could be the beginning of a bridge. It would enable us to cross over to a more reliable and civilized method of investigative interviewing than the cruel expedient of compelling the individual to produce evidence from his own mouth.

Commentary #10 by Laura H. Nirider: Why the law fails to prevent false confessions

A profound disconnect exists between the current state of empirical knowledge regarding the problem of false confessions and the common law governing confessions.

The Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution bar the introduction of involuntary confessions against defendants. U.S. Supreme Court jurisprudence, in turn, is generally understood as separating the question of voluntariness from reliability; that is, in weighing whether or not to admit a confession, judges must determine whether a confession is voluntary without reference to whether it is false (Colorado v. Connelly, 1986).

Thus confined, judges regularly must decide what it means to coerce an involuntary confession – and the law provides precious little guidance to help them answer. Nearly 35 years have passed since the U.S. Supreme Court last issued any substantive guidance on what it means for a confession to be involuntary (Colorado v. Connelly, 1986). Dating from the 1970s and 1980s, existing jurisprudence generally deems confessions involuntary only when police use extreme interrogation tactics – physical abuse, or its psychological equivalent – and even then, the law does not require suppression (Dassey v. Dittmann, 2017).
These same 35 years, however, have wrought profound changes in our ability to understand what sets of empirical circumstances actually give rise to involuntary confessions. Over that time, DNA technology was invented – and it has begun proving confessions false at a higher rate, and under different circumstances, than previously thought (National Registry of Exonerations, 2020). Setting aside the rare voluntary false confession, which typically arises outside the context of police interrogation, the overwhelming majority of known false confessions can safely be considered to have been coerced. Importantly, therefore, this known body of false confessions can yield – and, in the hands of skilled researchers, has already begun yielding – real answers as to what an involuntary confession actually looks like (Drizin & Leo, 2004).

Thanks to a second modern-day development – the recent surge in state laws requiring the electronic recording of interrogations – we can begin analysing how these involuntary confessions were generated. Extreme tactics, it turns out, are not always required to coerce a confession. Depending on the vulnerabilities of the person being interrogated, threats of punishment will do the trick, as will false promises of leniency – both per se legal techniques (Kassin et al., 2010). Police deception about the evidence – also legal under a U.S. Supreme Court ruling from the 1960s – is seen frequently (Frazier v. Cupp, 1969; Kassin et al., 2010). For children, involuntary confessions can be elicited in as little as 20 minutes (Elias v. City of New York, 2011).

This knowledge provides an opportunity to bring outdated involuntariness law into touch with research-tested reality. Researchers have already begun plumbing these cases; but as the body of proven false confessions grows, more research is needed to further refine our understanding of which tactics, combined with which vulnerabilities, are most commonly associated with coerced confessions. I would also encourage social scientists to examine how a revised voluntariness jurisprudence – one derived from modern-day empirical cases – would improve judicial decision-making. After all, the vast majority of proven false confession cases were not screened out by existing voluntariness jurisprudence; in most of those cases, judges admitted those confessions, leading to wrongful convictions.

Armed with researchers’ conclusions, it will then fall to lawyers to urge the reformation of voluntariness law – from the U.S. Supreme Court down. Working together in this fashion, researchers and lawyers can finally begin to patch the longstanding disconnect between confession law and reality.

Concluding thoughts

The primary goal of this urgent issues paper was to provide insights into the specific areas of interrogation practices that leading scholars believe require immediate attention. It appears that the issues outlined by the authors fall into one of three categories. First, there appeared to be some topics presented for which researchers have a solid foundation to support the call for immediate reform, such as avoiding the use of false evidence and coercive tactics, recording all interactions, and implementing interrogation protocols that are ethical and science-based. In these instances, however, it appears that the extant research is slow to foster major change in the legal system and thus more mobilization is required in order to enact reform. Second, some topics were presented that are critically important, but have not received as much research attention, such as changes that can be made to recruitment processes and the characteristics that should be screened for when selecting interrogators, the lack of police response to interrogation failures, and the
paradox regarding the interpretation of implied messages in the legal system. Before we can begin serious reform in these areas, more research is required. Finally, one particular topic stood out as previously undetected and in need of research that will require major mobilization and attention from researchers prior to focusing on any measures of reform – the self-appointment of law enforcement officers as a proxy for testing voluntariness. We encourage readers to explore all of these topics with vigour, so that we can move closer to the reform that is so urgently required and move away from the negative outcomes that are so clearly associated with problematic interrogation practices.

When considered together, one theme that emerged from these independent contributions – which is not unique to the field of interrogations – was science-lag, or the idea that attitudes and understanding about interrogations have failed to keep pace with scientific knowledge on the topic. It is highly disconcerting that scientists and practitioners have spent much of their lives studying interrogation practices but that their research – which is often well-established and accepted by the scientific community (e.g., effects of false evidence and need to record interrogations, e.g., Kassin et al., 2018) – does not appear to be incorporated, as widely as one would expect, into the thinking and decision-making of those that matter (i.e., law enforcement, lawyers, judges). Is the failure to adopt scientific findings on interrogations due to unfamiliarity with the accumulated body of research, scientific illiteracy, or some other psychological explanation? While we urge the scientific community to focus their attention on the areas raised by the contributors to this issue, it is also clear that a parallel stream of research on ways to minimize science-lag in the legal system may be warranted.

Another theme that emerged from the contributions was the apparent disparity in the criminal justice system with respect to views of interrogation practices. For example, it seems that within the same system, perspectives on responding to and mitigating failures, the impact of implied messages, and the importance of selecting in recruits with core competencies are viewed differently in the context of interrogations than they are in other areas of the justice system. What is it about the interrogation context that causes this discrepancy in the way certain issues are treated? It is clear that research is needed to determine the underlying causes of such disparity and identify and test ways to illustrate that the interrogation context need not be treated contrarily.

What should be clear from these contributions is that achieving the reforms advocated by the scholars in this paper can be achieved by putting a concerted effort into addressing the lines of enquiry outlined herein. However, it is not suggested that other lines of enquiry are less important or need abandoning. This suggestion for the scientific community to focus as a collective may increase the speed at which reforms are implemented. It appears that replications of interrogation research occur less frequently than replications in other areas. Consider, as but one example, research related to offender ‘get tough’ programmes on recidivism rates. Research has shown that such programmes have little effect on reducing recidivism rates, a finding that is based upon studies with a collective sample size that exceeds 400,000 (with more than 500 effect sizes; Smith, Goggin, & Gendreau, 2002). Similar examples could be provided from other domains, such as personnel selection research (e.g., Schmidt & Hunter, 1998). One can only speculate that the fewer replications in the interrogation field may be due to researchers being encouraged to find their own niche area or having had replications rejected during the peer-review process because they did not make an original contribution to the literature. The cajoling of researchers to find novel areas should cease, with researchers and students strengthening their commitment to research on core
topics. To achieve change, efforts need to be put into the areas that require reform immediately.

The development of scientific-practitioner partnerships is undoubtedly another beneficial path to achieving the desired reforms. Practitioners can inform researchers of key areas that require exploration and provide guidance regarding ecological validity. In turn, scientists can help practitioners improve the way they conduct interrogations and provide guidance regarding how reforms can be made within organizations. As can be seen from the contributions, both academics and practitioners have similar interests in improving interrogations for the better and have identified similar problems that require action. It is only through trust and cooperation by all parties that substantive changes we wish to see will occur.

As with any paper of this type, there are likely other urgent issues that require consideration and we do not intend to imply that these are the only issues worth studying. It is also worth noting again that our contributions pertained to issues in the United States and Canada, thereby excluding other very important issues in other countries and cultures. Of course, given that only a small sample of the accomplished scholars in this area contributed to this issue, other academic and practitioner perspectives have been missed as well. As should be encouraged of all academic discourse, we encourage constructive criticism of the arguments presented in this paper. We ultimately hope that researchers take up the call for more collective and focused action to resolve the urgent issues in our field.

Conflicts of interest
All authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions
Brent Snook, Ph.D. (Project administration; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing); Laura Fallon (Conceptualization; Project administration; Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing); William Todd Barron (Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing); Saul Kassin (Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing); Steven Kleinman (Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing); Richard A Leo (Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing); Christian A Meissner (Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing); Lorca Morello (Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing); Laura H Nirider (Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing); Allison D Redlich (Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing); James L. Trainum (Writing – original draft; Writing – review & editing).

References


Dassey v. Dittmann, 877 F3d 297, 304 (7th Cir. 2017).


Received 13 April 2020; revised version received 22 June 2020