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# 9 10 Police Practices and 11 Perceptions Regarding Juvenile 12 Interrogation and Interrogative 13 Suggestibility 14 15

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20 **Recent media coverage has highlighted cases in which**  
21 **young suspects were wrongly convicted because they pro-**  
22 **vided interrogation-induced false confessions. Although**  
23 **youth may be more highly suggestible and easily influenced**  
24 **by authority than adults, police are trained to use the same**  
25 **psychologically coercive and deceptive tactics with youth**  
26 **as with adults. This investigation is the first standard**  
27 **documentation of the reported interrogation practices of**  
28 **law enforcement and police beliefs about the reliability of**  
29 **these techniques and their knowledge of child develop-**  
30 **ment. Participants were 332 law enforcement officers**  
31 **who completed surveys about interrogation procedures**  
32 **and developmental issues pertaining to youth. Results**  
33 **indicated that, while police acknowledge some develop-**  
34 **mental differences between youth and adults, there were**  
35 **indications that (1) how police perceive youth in general**  
36 **and how they perceive and treat them in the interrogation**  
37 **context may be contradictory and (2) their general view is**  
38 **that youth can be dealt with in the same manner as adults.**  
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## 40 INTRODUCTION

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42 Obtaining confessions from criminal suspects is a common way in which law  
43 enforcement officers incriminate those suspected of committing a crime (Kassin &  
44 Gudjonsson, 2004). In a review of the literature on confessions, Kassin and  
45 Gudjonsson (2004) report that between 42 and 55% of suspects confess in response  
46 to an interrogation. Legal professionals and jurors tend to interpret confessions as  
47 strong, and usually unequivocal, evidence of guilt (Kassin & Sukel, 1997; Leo,  
48 [1996](#)<sup>Q2</sup>). These statistics vouch for interrogation as a successful method of

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incriminating guilty criminals, unless instances occur in which innocent suspects provide false confessions that are not recognized by police as flawed. The general assumption is that police do not want to obtain confessions from innocent suspects, and most innocent suspects do not purposefully make self-incriminating statements. However, documented cases exist of false confessions leading to the conviction of innocent suspects. It is difficult to determine precisely how often such faulty convictions transpire because the United States criminal justice system has not developed a standard system for recording instances of wrongful convictions or causes of conviction error. There is no national registry of exonerations and official records do not always indicate whether pardons or dismissals were based on innocence. Some jurisdictions document all identified contributions to wrongful convictions while other jurisdictions only record primary sources of misconviction error. As a result, estimates of the number of wrongful convictions and their causes vary drastically. In 2003 it was determined that approximately 8 percent of inmates on death row in Illinois were innocent (Furman, 2003). In contrast, the vast majority of a sample of judges, attorneys, sheriffs, and police chiefs estimated that approximately .1–1% of U.S. convictions are in error (Huff, Ratner, & Sagarin, 1996). Estimates of false confessions as the leading cause of error in wrongful convictions range from 14 to 25% (Drizin & Leo, 2004). For example, Scheck, Neufeld, and Dwyer (2000) found that approximately 23% of individuals in the U.S. who were exonerated by DNA evidence provided false confessions before they were wrongfully convicted. Thus, if even the more conservative estimate of occurrences of wrongful convictions (.5 percent, an average of the findings of Huff et al.) is used, of the 2.2 million people incarcerated in the U.S. in 2005, approximately 11,000 are wrongfully convicted, and applying the false confession rate of Scheck et al. of 23% yields more than 2,500 who are likely to have falsely confessed.

Given statistics that verify that false confessions may contribute to wrongful convictions, police interrogators should carefully evaluate the validity of confessions. However, police are trained to use psychologically manipulative interrogation tactics that may elicit unreliable reports from suspects (Gudjonsson, 2003; Kassin, 1997; Leo, 1992), and are not trained about how these tactics sometimes lead the innocent to falsely confess (Drizin & Leo, 2004). Leo (1996) found that, of a wide range of sociological and legal variables, only the use of a higher number of interrogation tactics and greater amount of time spent in interrogations related to a higher likelihood of obtaining confessions, suggesting that the effort and energy expended by law enforcement is one of the most important factors in explaining whether or not a confession is obtained during interrogation.

Most of the assertions that psychologically coercive and manipulative police interrogation tactics are frequently employed and may lead to false confessions arise from what scholars have gleaned from interrogation training manuals, a few transcripts of interrogation-induced false confessions that have been made available to the public (Drizin & Colgan, 2004), and one researcher's initial examination of 182 actual interrogations, mainly from one police department (Leo, 1996). No effort in the academic community has been made to provide law enforcement with the opportunity to talk about their perceptions of the likelihood of false confessions or the types of interrogation strategy they use and what they believe about their effectiveness. As one law professor has recently written, "we know little more about actual police interrogation practices than we did at the time of *Miranda*" (Kamisar,

2003). In order to advance understanding of the interrogation process and its role in the elicitation of false confessions, it is critical that scholars incorporate multi-method designs that consider more than initial examination of training manuals and the limited number of available transcripts/videos. Thus, one goal of the present study is to use the perspectives of law enforcement personnel to provide the first standard documentation of reported interrogation practices and their beliefs about the efficacy of these strategies.

In particular, this project documents the reported interrogation strategies of police officers and their beliefs about the reliability of these techniques used with *young* suspects (who may be especially vulnerable to the pressures of interrogation and the possibility of false confessions, Drizin & Leo, 2004). In fact, false confession rates appear to be higher in samples of juveniles; in a descriptive study of 328 exoneration cases 44% of the juvenile exonerees falsely confessed compared with 13% of the adults, and among the youngest juveniles (aged 12–15 years) 75% falsely confessed (Gross, Jacoby, Matheson, Montgomery, & Patil, 2005). Research results strongly suggest that youth are more likely to provide unreliable reports (including false confessions) during suggestive questioning than adults (Ceci, 1994; Dunn, 1995; Leo, 1994; Loftus, 1979; Redlich & Goodman, 2003; Richardson, Gudjonsson, & Kelly, 1995). These statistics expose a pressing concern regarding the welfare of *youth* and raise the question of whether consideration is given to the increased suggestibility of youth and its impact on the reliability of their confessions. While research has begun to address false confessions by adult suspects, occurrences of false confessions by youth have largely been ignored. Thus, in addition to documenting the reported interrogation practices of police, this project aims to document law enforcement beliefs about the differences between youth and adults concerning susceptibility to suggestive questioning and general developmental capacities. Before proceeding to the results of this investigation, we provide background for the project goals by outlining case law related to interrogation procedures with adult and youth suspects, various interrogation practices taught to police and the social science literature relating to the efficacy of such techniques.

### Police Interrogation Practices

Case law has attempted to establish protections for citizens during criminal interrogations, yet it only places minimal restrictions on law enforcement officers. The *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966) decision required police to read suspects their rights when in custodial interrogation and prohibited them from using direct threats, promises, or physical abuse. However, these guidelines do not prevent police from using subtler, more sophisticated tactics, such as trickery, coercion, and deceit (Leo, 1996).

Although the United States Supreme Court has recognized youthful immaturity (*Roper v. Simmons*, 2005) and vulnerability in psychologically coercive interrogations and dealings with the police (*Gallegos v. Colorado*, 1962; *Haley v. Ohio*, 1948; *In re Gault*, 1967), the justice system has never provided specific instructions or restrictions regarding the handling of youth under 18 in interrogations (Dawson, 1990). *Fare v Michael C* (1979) required that juvenile waivers of rights should be judged by “totality of circumstances” (whether they are made “knowingly, intelligently, and voluntarily”), but these judgments are highly subjective and

require determinations by circumstances of cases rather than by application of a specific set of rules.

Since courts have provided few guidelines about acceptable interrogation techniques with youth (Dawson, 1990), police executives have developed training programs to teach officers criminal interviewing skills. In reality, this has meant that police are trained to apply procedures they use with adults to interrogations with youth. In fact, Redlich, Silverman, Chen, and Steiner (2004) interviewed 35 individuals about their interactions with police as suspects (approximately 18 were questioned by police when they were juveniles) and found that police used many of the same interrogation techniques with youth and adults. These strategies are mainly taken from the Reid Technique, developed by Inbau, Reid, Buckley, and Jayne (2001), which is the most widely implemented police interrogation training in the United States. Over 300,000 professionals in law enforcement have been trained to use the Reid Technique over the previous three decades ([http://www.reid.com/success\\_reid/r\\_success.html](http://www.reid.com/success_reid/r_success.html)). Reid Training associates advertise that “When asked which vendors they rely on most for building their own skills and that of staff, a whopping 80% of security pros cited John E. Reid and Associates” ([http://www.reid.com/r\\_about.html](http://www.reid.com/r_about.html)). It is worth noting that the first author attended a full four-day Reid Interviewing and Interrogation training program, which taught police to incorporate two components into criminal questioning procedures: the Behavioral Analysis Interview and the Interrogation.

#### *Reid Technique: The Behavioral Analysis Interview (BAI)*

Inbau et al. (2001) and Reid and Inbau (2000) instruct police to begin all criminal questioning with a BAI to determine whether the interviewee is being truthful or deceptive and whether he/she is the prime suspect in the case. The BAI is a form of behavior symptom analysis used for the detection of deception and typically involves asking the interviewee a set of 15 questions to analyze non-verbal and verbal responses. Deceptive non-verbal behaviors include gaze aversion, unnatural body postures, and self-manipulations such as touching and scratching (Reid & Inbau, 2000). Deceptive verbal behaviors include liberal responses to the question “What should happen to the person who did this?” (e.g., “He/she should be given counseling so he/she does not murder anyone again”), non-contracted denials such as “No I did not”, qualifying phrases such as “I swear”, lack of confidence, and delays in response. Unfortunately, as discussed in an empirical review below, many of these verbal and non-verbal behaviors have little discriminant function in the identification of liars versus truth-tellers (Vrij, 2000). Yet, Reid and Inbau (2000) instruct police to analyze the respondent’s set of responses for determination of truthfulness or deception. If the respondent is thought to be deceptive, he/she becomes a suspect and police begin the interrogation. This is a critical moment for the suspect, for the interrogation is typically a more adversarial, coercive procedure in which police are instructed to be relentless in their pursuit of a confession.

#### *Reid Technique: The Interrogation*

Once the interrogation begins, police are instructed to use coercive and deceptive techniques to obtain a confession (Reid & Inbau, 2000) by presenting false evidence,

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6 preventing the suspect from speaking unless he/she is making a confession, tricking  
7 the suspect into a confession by offering an understanding and sympathetic attitude,  
8 and minimizing the moral seriousness of the crime. Police are also taught to “repeat,  
9 repeat, repeat” (Reid & Inbau, 2000, p. 60). Although police are not encouraged to  
10 engage in extensive interviewing for legal purposes, Reid and Inbau (2000) suggest  
11 that time is not limited and sometimes it is appropriate to wear the suspect down. In  
12 fact, an examination of proven false confession cases in which length of interrogation  
13 was available revealed that the mean duration was 16.3 hours (Drizin & Leo, 2004).  
14 Leading and suggestive questioning are also taught as a means to fabricate stories of  
15 how and why the crime may have happened. Reid and Inbau (2000) teach police,  
16 “do not ask for reasons, suggest them” (p. 60). They also teach interviewers to  
17 condition the suspect to respond in the affirmative before they ask for a confession,  
18 by asking repeated questions the suspect will agree with, such as “You’ve been  
19 cooperative?”. In addition, police are instructed to use trickery by asking alternative  
20 questions with two choices where either choice is an admission of guilt, such as “Did  
21 he attack you, or did you become angry first?” (Reid & Inbau, 2000, p. 73).  
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### 24 *Reid Technique: Application to Juveniles*

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26 During the four-day, 32-hour training that the first author attended, the Reid  
27 instructors almost exclusively focused on the use of such techniques with adult  
28 suspects. Only 10 minutes of instruction were dedicated to youth and this was to  
29 advocate the use of the same strategies with youth as with adults. Police were taught  
30 that the “principles discussed with respect to adult suspects are just as applicable for  
31 use with the young ones” (Inbau et al., 2001, p. 298). Such instruction even included  
32 encouragement of the use of adult language with youth. In addition, the Reid  
33 instructors never discussed developmental issues that may affect the reliability of  
34 deceptive and coercive interrogation techniques used with youth.  
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### 37 *Police Manuals*

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39 Although the Reid Technique is the most popular interrogation training, less  
40 common educational provisions similarly neglect to provide guidelines for handling  
41 youth. The *Police Juvenile Procedures Manual*, sponsored by the Office of Juvenile  
42 Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1983), does not specify interrogation  
43 procedures for youth beyond directions for how to provide *Miranda* warnings.  
44 The *American Police Chiefs, Sheriffs and Command Officers Manual and Directory*  
45 (Arenberg & Hosford, 1981) provides minimal instructions for handling youth  
46 interrogations and encourages the use of coercion and behavioral analysis for the  
47 detection of deception.  
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## 50 **Reliability of Interviewing and Interrogation Tactics**

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52 A small amount of *police* literature, primarily published by Reid and Associates,  
53 suggests that police interviewing and interrogation tactics are effective in

incriminating guilty suspects ([http://www.reid.com/success\\_reid/r\\_success.html](http://www.reid.com/success_reid/r_success.html)). However, a vast amount of *social science* literature indicates these tactics may not be appropriate, especially for use with young suspects (for a review see Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004). The main concerns are (1) the influence of adult language, confusing questioning and trickery on the ability of young suspects to comprehend police questioning and thus respond reliably, (2) the fallibility of deception detection using the behavior of young suspects, and (3) the influence of suggestive, leading, and repeated questioning on the reliability of reports from young suspects.

### *Comprehension Literature*

Research has demonstrated that questions which include multiple parts, negatives, double negatives, and difficult vocabulary often lead to inaccurate reports by minors of all ages (Perry et al., 1995; Saywitz, Jaenicke, & Camparo, 1990; Walker, 1994). In an examination of developmental differences in individual's conceptualizations of the judicial system, adolescents aged 13–18 who understood basic legal terminology still had difficulty understanding more technical legal concepts and terminology (Warren-Leubecker, Tate, Hinton, & Ozbek, 1989). Children under 10 years of age had difficulty understanding common legal terms (Saywitz et al., 1990) and juveniles under 14 years of age could not meet the standards for adequate comprehension of their *Miranda* rights that are required of adults (Grisso, 1981). The alternative questioning tactic (asking two questions in a choice-format, where an affirmative answer to either is indicative of guilt) is also problematic when used with young suspects, given that children are likely to choose between the forced-choice answers presented by police even when none are correct (Lyon, 1999). The results of these studies raise questions as to whether young children and adolescents can be expected to comprehend and reliably respond to police questioning.

### *Deception Literature*

According to Reid and Associates, investigators trained in their Behavior Analysis Interview (BAI) can distinguish truth and deception at an 85% level of accuracy ([http://www.reid.com/services/r\\_behavior.html](http://www.reid.com/services/r_behavior.html)). Research by others of police officers and control groups of individuals who observe interviews and make decisions about the truthfulness of the interviewee has generally failed to support this claim (DePaulo & Pfeifer, 1986; Kassin, Meissner, & Norwick, 2005; Meissner & Kassin, 2002), and even suggests that “typical” deceptive behavior does not exist (Vrij, 2001). Numerous studies have shown the police accuracy rate to be between 45 and 60% (Vrij, 2001), and over 40 studies have shown that, in comparison to police officers, college students have a similar or higher accuracy rate when detecting deceit (DePaulo & Pfeifer, 1986; Kassin & Fong, 1999; Kassin et al., 2005; for a complete review see Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004, and Vrij, 2000). Even more discouraging are research results that training police and college students in the Reid Technique actually decreases their accuracy in detection deception (Kassin & Fong, 1999; Meissner & Kassin, 2002).

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7 In regard to the specific indicators of deception that Reid and Inbau (2000)  
8 identify, research generally fails to support the discriminative function of these  
9 behaviors in the identification of liars versus truth-tellers. For example, gaze aversion  
10 has not been found to be a reliable indicator of deception (deTurk, 1991; Vrij, 2000;  
11 Vrij, Edward, Roberts, & Bull, 2000). Similarly, identification of response latency  
12 and pauses fails to improve accuracy in detection of deception (deTurk, 1991). Body  
13 movements such as hand gestures, foot and leg movements, and manipulations such  
14 as scratching body parts are generally of little value in reliably detecting deception  
15 (deTurk, 1991; Vrij et al., 2000).

16 Behavioral symptom analysis may be particularly inaccurate with young suspects.  
17 Although no literature has examined the accuracy of deception detection in youth, it  
18 appears that youth in general demonstrate many of the behaviors that Reid and  
19 Inbau (2000) label deceptive. First, it is likely that children and adolescents  
20 slouch more in their seats; medical scholars have widely accepted that youth slouch  
21 more than adults ([http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-50/ciren/networkreport/  
22 CNMC.pdf](http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-50/ciren/networkreport/CNMC.pdf)) and research has indicated that elements of postural control are still  
23 developing after 10 years of age (Nolan, Grigorenko, & Thorstensson, 2005).  
24 Second, children of various ages make less eye contact than adults (Ashear &  
25 Snortum, 1971; Levine & Sutton-Smith, 1973); yet, Reid and Inbau (2000) consider  
26 lack of eye contact to be a deceptive behavior independent of age. Third, it is likely  
27 that youth demonstrate more delays in response if interrogators use legal language  
28 that is difficult for them to comprehend. Indeed, response latency is a reliable  
29 measure of comprehension difficulties in children (Roberts, 1983).

### 31 *Suggestibility and Psychosocial Immaturity Literature*

32  
33 Social scientists indicate that many of the Reid techniques may affect the reliability of  
34 youth's reports. Evidence suggests that children are more suggestible than adults,  
35 may easily be influenced by questioning from authority figures, and may provide  
36 inaccurate reports when questioned in a leading, repeated, and suggestive fashion  
37 (Ceci, 1994; Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Dunn, 1995; Loftus, 1979). Most of these  
38 suggestibility studies have been designed because of the concern over false reports of  
39 abuse by children; thus, results of suggestibility studies of children in investigative  
40 contexts cannot be directly extended to juveniles in interrogative contexts  
41 (Owen-Kostelnik, Reppucci, & Meyer, 2006). Forensic interviews involving  
42 potential child victims, in contrast to interrogations of child suspects, (a) do not  
43 involve children being accused of wrongdoing, (b) primarily involve children being  
44 interviewed about the actions of third parties, (c) do not involve an adversarial  
45 relationship with the interviewer/interrogator (although not all interrogations,  
46 especially pre-interrogation BAIs, are adversarial in nature, and children may be  
47 more likely to be swayed when questioned by figures of authority like police,  
48 Tobey and Goodman, 1992), (d) do not involve a *Miranda* reading, and (e) typically  
49 involve younger children (although the age at which juveniles are being interrogated  
50 is becoming younger and younger; Feld, 1999). However, specifically in regard to  
51 age, Bruck and Ceci (2004) argue that new research is revealing that older children  
52 and adolescents are also suggestible. For example, studies have failed to find  
53 differences between younger and older children (Bruck & London, 2003), and in

some cases older children were more suggestible than younger children (Finnilä, Mahlberga, Santtilaa, & Niemib, 2003; Zaragoza, Payment, Kichler, Stines, & Drivdahl, 2001).

Given the differences between forensic interviews of child victims and interrogations of suspects, it is also important to consider the suggestibility literature specifically involving the interrogative process. For example, other research indicates that juvenile suspects are more vulnerable than adult suspects to interrogative pressure. Specifically, interrogative suggestibility, defined as “the tendency of an individual’s account of events to be altered by misleading information and interpersonal pressure within interviews” (Singh & Gudjonsson, 1992, p. 155), is negatively related to age, and positively related to likelihood of false confession (Gudjonsson, 2003). Psychologically coercive strategies that contribute to interrogative suggestibility play on young suspects’ eagerness to please (Gudjonsson, 2003; Ofshe, 1989), firm trust of people in authority (Ofshe, 1989), lack of self-confidence (Ofshe, 1989), increased desire to protect friends/relatives and to impress peers, and increased desire to leave the interrogation sooner (Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Drizin & Leo, 2004; Grisso, 1981; Gudjonsson, 2003; Hall, 1980; Sigurdsson & Gudjonsson, 1994). Many of these reactions may be a result of diminished developmental capacities (Fried & Reppucci, 2001; Scott, Reppucci, & Woolard, 1995) or diminished psychosocial maturity (responsibility, perspective-taking abilities, and temperance) (Steinberg & Cauffman, 1996). Many diminished developmental capacities of youth were recently recognized by the United States Supreme Court in *Roper v. Simmons* (2005), whereby the Supreme Court forbade the execution of offenders who were under the age of 18 when their crimes were committed. The Supreme Court characterized these developmental differences as “susceptibility to immature and irresponsible behavior” (p. 2) and “vulnerability and comparative lack of control over their immediate surroundings” (p. 2).

Interrogation tactics that fail to consider youthful interrogative suggestibility and psychosocial immaturity, and thus decrease the reliability of young suspects’ reports, include presentation of false evidence and minimization tactics (minimizing the seriousness of the crime) (Kassin, 1997; Redlich & Goodman, 2003; Russano, Meissner, Narchet, & Kassin, 2005), and repeated and leading questioning by unfamiliar authority figures (Ceci, 1994; Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Dunn, 1995; Leo, 1994; Quas, Schaaf, Alexander, & Goodman, 2000; Tobey & Goodman, 1992). For instance, Tobey and Goodman (1992) found that when children were questioned by either a neutral interviewer or a police officer, the children in the police condition gave fewer accurate statements and more inaccurate statements than children in the neutral condition. Likewise, although the stereotypic rebellious adolescent might not be associated with an increased tendency to comply with authority, within the legal context, adolescent suspects often demonstrate such a tendency (Grisso et al., 2003).

A review of individual differences and suggestibility (Bruck & Melnyk, 2004) indicates that the factors that heighten the risk of false confessions from youth could be exacerbated amongst minorities from low SES backgrounds who, according to demographic statistics on arrest rates (Walker, 2004), are more likely than other people to be suspected of committing a crime. Specifically, children from lower SES backgrounds are more suggestible than children from higher SES backgrounds, and after accounting for SES African-American children are more suggestible than

Caucasian children. Similarly, Richardson et al. (1995) suggests that adolescent suspects with lower intellectual abilities are more suggestible.

## The Current Study

Many of the social science findings contraindicate what Reid instructors teach law enforcement officers. As such, it is crucial to understand what law enforcement officers actually believe about the complex network of factors affecting the validity of youthful confessions, as well as what interrogation strategies they reportedly use with youth suspects. As discussed above, Leo's (1996) initial examination of 182 interrogations suggests that police use psychologically coercive interrogation techniques that are "Reid-like", although Leo did not report the effect of suspect age on the use of techniques. It is not expected that strategy use would depend on suspect age, given that police training manuals do not mention the diminished developmental capacities of youth and how these limited capacities may affect the reliability of their reports, nor do they advocate for the use of different interrogation tactics with youth and adults (Inbau et al., 2001). Likewise, preliminary retrospective data from a small sample of criminal suspects suggests that police use the same interrogation techniques with youth and adults (Redlich et al., 2004<sup>Q3</sup>). Thus, the main hypotheses were that police would (1) lack accurate knowledge about child development and how diminished developmental capacities (i.e., suggestibility, psychosocial immaturity, and impaired comprehension) may affect the reliability of confessions by youth, (2) lack knowledge about empirical studies that demonstrate the unreliability of Reid techniques with suspects of all ages, and (3) indicate use of similar psychologically coercive and deceptive interrogation practices with youth and adults.

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## METHOD

### Participants

Participants were 332 law enforcement officers from the Baltimore County Police Department. Of the 332 respondents (some of whom did not answer demographic questions), 83.7% were male, 9.3% were female, and 7% did not provide the information. The racial mixture was 79.8% White, 5.4% Black, 1.2% Hispanic, .6% Asian-American, and 1.2% other. Approximately 60.5% reported having a child/children. The average age was 35 years, the average years of experience in law enforcement was 11 years, and the predominant educational level of the officers was a bachelor's degree (40.7%). The police represented a range of ranks and responsibilities: 67.8% were officers, 13.9% were investigators, 11.7% were other ranks, and 6.6% did not provide information. Approximately 84% had used criminal interviewing procedures with suspects within the previous year.

### Materials

To document the belief systems and reported interrogation practices of police, two survey instruments were developed: (1) police interrogation and (2) developmental

knowledge. Both survey instruments were specifically designed for the current study because no historical data collection instruments were available. Survey constructs were identified and defined by (a) a thorough review of the literature on child development and suggestibility (Ceci & Bruck, 1993), the literature on psychological issues in police interrogation (Gudjonsson, 2003; Kassin, 1997), and police interrogation manuals (Inbau et al., 2001) as well as (b) qualitative observation of videotapes of actual interrogations, obtained from a local police department. Next, the survey items were constructed from consultation with a national police research organization. Finally, several interviews were conducted with focus groups of police familiar with the constructs in the interrogation survey. These groups were administered pilot versions of the surveys and asked to provide feedback about the clarity and relevance of the items to the constructs the authors intended to measure. Based on feedback from the focus groups, survey revisions were made.

### *Police Interrogation Survey (PIS)*

The PIS consisted of 9 demographic questions and 49 interrogation questions designed to document police (a) reported use of interrogation practices and (b) beliefs concerning interrogation procedures that affect the reliability of reports and confessions. The majority of the PIS was comprised of statements that participants rated on a six-point Likert response scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The remainder of the questions asked participants to provide percentages indicating how often they believed certain events occurred. The PIS took approximately 12 minutes to complete.

Police received one of three versions of the PIS, which contained the same questions about interrogation concerning either (1) *children* under 14 years of age, (2) *youth* ages 14–17 years, or (3) *adults* 18 years and older. Questions about young suspects were separated into two surveys (children and youth) because research suggests that developmental differences (relevant to interviewing in legal contexts) exist between those 13 years and younger and those 14–17 years (Grisso, 1981; Scott et al., 1995).

### *Developmental Knowledge Survey (DKS)*

The survey consisted of 20 questions designed to assess participants’ general developmental knowledge concerning youth and adults. Survey items included developmental issues that may relate to interrogation practices, e.g. gaze aversion and slouching posture. Participants indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement using a six-point Likert-type scale, circling “1” if they strongly disagreed and “6” if they strongly agreed. The DKS took approximately 4 minutes to complete.

Participants received one of two versions of the DKS, which contained the same questions concerning either developmental differences between (1) *children* (under 14 years of age) and adults or (2) *youth* (ages 14 to 17 years) and adults. Participants who received the *child* PIS received the *child* DKS. Participants who received the *youth* PIS received the *youth* DKS. Participants who received the *adult* PIS received either the *child* or *youth* DKS.

## Design and Procedure

The researchers established collaboration with a police research organization and a large metropolitan county police department. The researchers then met with the chief of the police agency to obtain consent for the project. The first author visited each of 11 precincts of the police agency to distribute the surveys. She attended each of the precincts' roll calls and investigative units to recruit participants and provide explanation and rationale for the project. All participants were assured that their responses would be confidential, their participation was voluntary, and no demographic information would be associated with any specific person. Each participant signed a consent form before completing the survey, which was collected separately to ensure confidentiality.

Each police participant received a manila envelope with one of the four versions of the surveys: (1) *child* PIS and *child* DKS, (2) *youth* PIS and *youth* DKS, (3) *adult* PIS and *child* DKS, or (4) *adult* PIS and *child* DKS. The two surveys were stapled together and the order was counterbalanced such that half of the participants received the DKS before the PIS and half received the PIS before the DKS. Of the 342 law enforcement officers invited to participate, 332 agreed to complete the surveys. The high response rate was likely due to the support of a police research organization that is highly regarded by the law enforcement community, obtaining participation in person rather than through mailings of the surveys, and meeting with police in small groups to address their questions and concerns about the research.

## RESULTS

### Preliminary Analyses

Principal axis factoring was conducted separately on each of the two surveys to confirm the number of factors that provided the best fit to Likert-scale data; the factors were rotated using Promax rotation. Four factors were confirmed for the PIS; two factors were confirmed for the DKS, but the DKS factor solution was not used because there was no interpretable meaning to the mathematically possible factors. Results regarding three interrogation factors are discussed (the fourth factor involved filler questions regarding rapport building, which were not relevant for the current paper): (1) suspects' comprehension of their rights and the intent of a police interview (Cronbach  $\alpha = .84$ ), (2) police ability to adequately detect deception (Cronbach  $\alpha = .76$ ), and (3) the suggestibility of suspects during questioning (Cronbach  $\alpha = .63$ ). Table 1 presents items in these factors and the factor loadings. (Given that the factor loadings of the fourth item in each of the three factors were low, parallel analyses were conducted with three-item and four-item factors and no differences were found; Cronbach alpha coefficients did not increase with the removal of the fourth item from the scales. Thus, the four-item factors were used for analyses.) Factor means are presented in Table 2.

Preliminary *t*-tests indicated that there were few order effects regarding which survey was completed first. Police who completed the PIS before the DKS more strongly agreed that youth understood their rights and the intent of a police interview. Similarly, on 3 of the 20 DKS items, police who completed the DKS

Table 1. Factor Loadings of Interrogation Survey (PIS) Items

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
<i>Factor 1: Comprehension of rights and intent to a police interview</i>				
Children understand their right to an attorney	.90	.19	.10	.13
Children understand their right to remain silent	.82	.10	.09	.10
Miranda rights are well understood by children	.85	.28	.11	.14
Children understand the intent of a police interview	.52	.30	.14	.10
<i>Factor 2: Detection of deception</i>				
Only guilty children react with discomfort to questions	.15	.83	.03	.09
Only guilty children react defensively to questions	.23	.80	.15	.06
Only innocent children cooperative during interviewing	.02	.60	.04	.07
Only innocent children produce direct responses to questions	.17	.45	.10	.13
<i>Factor 3: Suggestibility of suspects</i>				
The reports of events given by children are more susceptible to suggestion by interviewers than are those given by adults	.02	.08	.68	.06
Children are more likely to confess to crimes they did not commit than adults	.12	.03	.64	.02
Compared to adults, children are more easily influenced by trickery during interviewing	.16	.10	.54	.08
Children incorporate elements of stories told by police into their own reports when they are interviewed for more than a couple of hours	.13	.01	.45	.12

Note: The term "children" is used, although "youth" or "adults" were also used depending on the version of the survey.

before the PIS more strongly agreed that children/youth demonstrate psychosocial immaturity. Although the vast majority of the sample had been involved in criminal interviewing procedures, investigators are usually involved in more frequent and more serious (felony-related) interrogations; thus, we analyzed the data as a function of rank; these produced a few differences in responses, which are discussed below.

Preliminary correlations and *t*-tests were conducted to look for relationships between (a) each of the factors and remaining items from the PIS as well as items from the DKS and (b) participants' demographic characteristics. Participants' ethnicity, gender, age, level of education, and whether or not they had children were not related to any DKS or PIS items/factors. Participants' rank and years of work experience were related to a few PIS factors/items (direction of relationship will be discussed below) and were included as covariates in subsequent analyses.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of Interrogation Survey (PIS) Factors

Factor	Police-Child	Police-Youth	Police-Adult
Comprehension <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	3.57 (.93) <sup>a</sup>	4.30 (.80) <sup>b</sup>	4.30 (.99) <sup>b</sup>
Detection of Deception <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	2.66 (.76)	2.75 (.81)	2.79 (.87)
Suggestibility <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	3.52 (.67)	3.37 (.75)	—

Note: "1" = strongly disagree; "2" = disagree; "3" = slightly disagree; "4" = slightly agree; "5" = agree; "6" = strongly agree.

<sup>a</sup> = significant difference.

<sup>b</sup> = significant difference.

Chi-square tests were performed on the items in the PIS practice checklist, to examine differences in the percentage of endorsement of techniques across survey version (child, youth, adult). One-way analysis of variance procedures (ANOVAs) were performed on each of the PIS factors and remaining percentage items from the PIS; when categorical demographics were related to PIS factors or items, univariate general linear models (GLM) two-way between subject designs were performed to covary out the related demographic/s, and when continuous demographics were related to PIS factors/items one-way analysis of covariance procedures (ANCOVAs) were used. A single independent variable, type of survey, was included, with three levels for the PIS (child, youth, and adult version). Tukey's Studentized range HSD follow-up tests were performed. Independent-sample *t*-tests were performed on DKS items, with two levels for the type of survey (child and youth version). In DKS analyses, Bonferroni corrections were used to correct for the possibility of Type I errors. The responses of police are discussed with reference to the mean values and standard deviations displayed in Table 2 (PIS) and Table 4 below (DKS). The response of "1" indicates strong disagreement with the statement and the response of "6" indicates strong agreement with the statement. Only statistically significant effects are reported. No interactions between survey version and demographics were found.

## Police Interrogation Survey (PIS)

### *Knowledge/beliefs about reliability of techniques*

*Factor 1: Comprehension.* This factor included four statements regarding the suspect's ability to comprehend his/her *Miranda* rights and the intent attributed to a police interrogation (see Table 1). As seen in Table 2, police slightly agreed that children, youth, and adult suspects understand their rights and the intent of an interrogation. Interestingly, when rank was considered, investigators ( $M = 4.55$ ,  $SD = .83$ ) more strongly agreed that suspects understand rights and interrogation than officers ( $M = 3.99$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) did,  $F(5, 289) = 2.59$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .05$ . After adjusting for rank, responses differed across survey versions,  $F(2, 289) = 5.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ . *Post hoc* tests indicated that police agreed more strongly about youth ( $M = 4.30$ ,  $SD = .80$ ) and adults ( $M = 4.30$ ,  $SD = .99$ ) as compared with children ( $M = 3.57$ ,  $SD = .93$ ).

*Factor 2: Detection of deception.* This factor included four statements regarding whether or not innocent or guilty suspects respond in specific manners during interrogation (see Table 1). Police slightly disagreed with the idea that suspects behave in certain ways if they are guilty or innocent. No significant differences among survey versions were found on this factor,  $F(2, 322) = .67$ ,  $p = .51$ ,  $\eta^2 = .00$ .

*Detection of deception percentage questions.* There were three questions included in the PIS that asked participants to provide the percentage of time they believe police can reliably detect deception. The items asked how often police can reliably detect deception by watching eye movements, listening to speech patterns, and observing body language. On average, police indicated accuracy at detecting deception with

these techniques 53.7% (SD = 21.34%), 50.3% (SD = 20.01%), and 59.5% (SD = 20.04%) of the time, respectively (there were no differences among survey versions on any of the three items:  $F(2, 328) = .61, p = .54, \eta^2 = .00$ ;  $F(2, 328) = .24, p = .79, \eta^2 = .00$ ; and  $F(2, 328) = .38, p = .69, \eta^2 = .00$ ).

*Factor 3: Suggestibility.* This factor included four statements concerning the susceptibility of suspects to suggestion during interrogation (see Table 1) and was examined as a function of two survey versions (child and youth), because unlike previous items the suggestibility items were comparison statements between children or youth and adults. Police slightly disagreed/remained fairly neutral in regard to youth and child suspects' susceptibility to suggestion, respectively, although these differences were not significantly different,  $t(320) = 1.92, p = .06$ . Investigators ( $M = 3.11, SD = .79$ ) were less likely to acknowledge young suspects' susceptibility to suggestion than officers ( $M = 3.52, SD = .68$ ) were,  $F(5, 299) = 2.76, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$ .

*Suggestibility percentage questions.* There were questions included in the PIS that asked participants to provide the percentage of time they believe inaccurate reports and false confessions occur during interrogation. (The distributions of these variables are skewed; thus, medians and modes are presented with the means.) The first set of three statements asked police to identify the percentage of time they believed the techniques of repeated questioning, leading questioning, and presenting false evidence lead to confusion of memories, inaccurate reports, or inaccurate beliefs of guilt, respectively. Overall, police indicated that these techniques may lead to inaccurate memories, reports, or beliefs by suspects the following percentage of time: repeated questioning confuses memories, median = 40%, mode = 30% ( $M = 40.57\%, SD = 22.56\%$ ); leading results in inaccurate reports, median = 20%, mode = 10% ( $M = 26.98\%, SD = 22.23\%$ ); false evidence convinces innocents they are guilty, median = 10%, mode = 0% ( $M = 19.64\%, SD = 21.64\%$ ). After controlling for rank and experience, there were no significant differences among PIS versions on any of these items,  $F(2, 304) = .01, p = .99, \eta^2 = .00$ ,  $F(2, 298) = .86, p = .43, \eta^2 = .01$ , and  $F(2, 299) = .11, p = .90, \eta^2 = .00$ , respectively.

Police with more experience indicated that they believed that leading questions cause inaccurate statements from suspects, and false evidence convinces suspects they are guilty, less often than police with less experience,  $F(1, 296) = 6.89, p < .01, \eta^2 = .02$  and  $F(1, 297) = 14.89, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$ , respectively. Similarly, rank was related to these three items,  $F(5, 304) = 4.14, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$ ,  $F(5, 298) = 3.10, p < .01, \eta^2 = .05$ , and  $F(5, 299) = 5.00, p = .00, \eta^2 = .08$ , respectively. Specifically, detectives indicated less acknowledgement that these techniques may lead to errors than officers did (repeated questioning confuses memories, detectives  $M = 29.35\%, SD = 22.75\%$ , officers  $M = 43.18\%, SD = 22.56\%$ ; leading questions result in inaccurate reports, detectives  $M = 17.04\%, SD = 21.19\%$ , officers  $M = 29.66\%, SD = 22.20\%$ ; false evidence convinces innocents they are guilty, detectives  $M = 7.47\%, SD = 14.94\%$ , officers  $M = 23.40\%, SD = 22.47\%$ ).

A final question asked participants to provide the percentage of time police elicit false confessions from innocent suspects. Participants felt that police elicit false confessions 10% of the time (median and mode) ( $M = 12.80\%, SD = 14\%$ ), with no significant differences among age groups of suspects,  $F(2, 294) = .13, p = .88$ ,

$\eta^2 = .00$  after controlling for relevant demographics. More experienced police believed there was less of a chance of obtaining false confessions than less experienced police,  $F(1, 293) = 4.04, p < .05, \eta^2 = .01$ , and investigators ( $M = 6.02\%$ ,  $SD = 7.09\%$ ) indicated belief in a significantly lower likelihood of obtaining false confessions than officers ( $M = 14.53\%$ ,  $SD = 15.42\%$ ) did,  $F(5, 294) = 2.22, p < .05, \eta^2 = .04$ .

*Reported use of Interrogation Practices*

Using a checklist format, police were asked to indicate whether or not they had used certain techniques during interrogations in the previous year. The percentage of police who indicated use of each interrogation strategy is indicated in Table 3. If police had not interrogated suspects in the previous year (approximately 16% of sample), they were asked to indicate what techniques they would have used if they had interrogated suspects. There were no differences in the percentage of police who used various techniques according to whether or not they had interrogated suspects in the previous year. There were no significant differences among survey versions in responses to any of the interrogation practices, indicating that police use the same techniques with young children, older youth, and adult suspects. Depending on the particular technique, 17–87% of the police indicated that they use various Reid techniques.

In addition, two statements more directly asked police whether the same interrogation techniques are or should be used with juvenile and adult suspects. The results of these statements support the findings from the interrogation check-list format: when asked to respond to Likert-type statements, police slightly agreed that the same techniques are or should be used with youth and adults ( $M = 3.87, SD = 1.15$ , and  $M = 3.77, SD = 1.11$ , respectively).

*Interrogation Training*

Approximately 33% of police indicated that there was a need for more structured police training regarding the interrogation of youth.

Table 3. Percentage of Police Who Reported Use of Reid Interrogation Practices

	Child Suspects %	Youth Suspects %	Adult Suspects %
Deception detection from body language	84.3	78.6	86.7
Asking questions repeatedly	52.9	51.4	60.1
Minimizing seriousness of the crime	58.8	44.3	58.7
Using deceit	45.1	34.3	42.7
Presenting false evidence	35.3	30	25.9
Heightening the suspect's anxiety level	29.4	25.7	28
Discouraging suspect from making denials	37.3	30	25.9
Asking two incriminating questions, such that a positive response to either would indicate guilt	27.5	17.1	19.6
Tricking the suspect	23.5	20	21.7

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations for Items in the Developmental Knowledge Survey (DKS)

	Police-Child	Police-Youth
<b>Comprehension</b>		
Children/youth do not <i>understand the meaning of some words</i> that adults understand.	4.5 (.99)	4.38 (.90)
<b>Body Language</b>		
Male children/youth have a need to present a "macho" image.	4.06 (1.01) <sup>a</sup>	4.59 (.90) <sup>b</sup>
Children/youth make <i>eye contact</i> with others more frequently than adults.	2.80 (1)	2.69 (.96)
Children/youth sit with <i>slouched</i> body postures more often than adults.	3.82 (1.09) <sup>a</sup>	4.08 (1.08) <sup>b</sup>
<b>Suggestibility and Psychosocial Immaturity</b>		
Children/youth are <i>intimidated</i> by adult authority figures.	3.98 (1.07) <sup>a</sup>	3.41 (1.1) <sup>b</sup>
Children/youth are more easily <i>influenced by their peers</i> than adults.	4.7 (1) <sup>a</sup>	4.94 (.92) <sup>b</sup>
Compared to adults, children/youth are more concerned with <i>immediate outcomes</i> than with future outcomes.	4.55 (1.07)	4.38 (1.14)
Children/youth are frequently <i>unaware of long-term consequences</i> of their actions.	4.72 (1)	4.74 (.97)
Children/youth are more <i>impulsive</i> than adults.	4.21 (1.08) <sup>a</sup>	4.55 (.94) <sup>b</sup>
Adults use better <i>judgment</i> than children/youth.	3.8 (1.12)	3.7 (1.16)
Children/youth are more <i>competent</i> in their decision-making than adults.	2.52 (.82)	2.49 (.74)

Note: "1" = strongly disagree; "2" = disagree; "3" = slightly disagree; "4" = slightly agree; "5" = agree; "6" = strongly agree.

<sup>a</sup> = significant difference.

<sup>b</sup> = significant difference.

## Developmental Knowledge Survey (DKS)

Individual items in the DKS versions about children and youth in comparison to adults were examined by independent-sample *t*-tests. Since the factor analysis was not interpretable, items are grouped together under related topics for purposes of clarity (refer to Table 4 for items and mean item differences discussed below).

### *Comprehension*

One statement pertained to children's and youth's ability to comprehend adult language. Police agreed that there are some words that adults comprehend that youth and children do not understand, and there were no differences across survey versions,  $t(317) = 1.16$ ,  $p = .25$ .

### *Body Language*

Three statements asked police their beliefs about typical body language of children and youth. Police slightly agreed that male children and youth have a need to present a "macho" image. A significant effect across survey versions was observed on this item,  $t(321) = 4.96$ ,  $p < .001$ , such that police agreed more strongly about youth

than children. In another statement, police disagreed that children and youth tend to make eye contact with others more often than adults, with no differences across survey versions,  $t(312) = 1.01, p = .32$ . On a third statement, police slightly agreed that children and youth sit with slouched body postures more often than adults, and they agreed more strongly with the statement about youth than children,  $t(313) = 2.13, p < .05$ .

### *Suggestibility and Psychosocial Immaturity*

Seven statements addressed the suggestibility and psychosocial maturity of youth. On four of the seven items, there were no differences across survey versions. Police agreed that children are intimidated by adult authority figures but slightly disagreed about youth,  $t(310) = 4.64, p < .001$ . In another statement, police agreed that children and youth are more easily influenced by their peers than adults are, yet police agreed more strongly with this statement about youth than about children,  $t(312) = 2.26, p < .05$ . Police agreed that, compared with adults, children and youth are more concerned with immediate than with future outcomes, with no differences across survey versions,  $t(319) = 1.34, p = .18$ . Police also agreed that both children and youth are frequently unaware of the long-term consequences of their actions, with no differences across survey versions,  $t(318) = .14, p = .89$ . In addition, police agreed that children and youth are more impulsive than adults, although police agreed more strongly about youth than about children,  $t(311) = 2.93, p < .01$ . Finally, police slightly agreed that adults use better judgment than youth and children,  $t(313) = .76, p = .45$  and disagreed that children and youth are more competent than adults in their decision-making, with no differences across survey versions,  $t(317) = .39, p = .70$ .

## **DISCUSSION**

Our purpose was to document the belief systems and reported interrogation practices of 332 law enforcement officers on surveys regarding (1) interrogation (PIS) and (2) children's capacities (DKS). Analyses revealed that, while police understand some issues related to child development, they do not seem to apply this fundamental developmental knowledge to the interrogation context. Moreover, many police officers use Reid interrogation techniques including psychological coercion, trickery, and deceit, and they use the same techniques with children, youth, and adult suspects. The following summarizes our findings and discusses their relevance and implication.

### **Comprehension**

When asked about youth comprehension outside of the interrogation context, police agreed that children and youth do not understand some words that adults use and made no distinctions between the two age groups. However, when asked about the comprehension abilities of suspects in interrogation, police indicated that suspects of

all ages understand their rights and intent of interrogations. Although police agreed less strongly that young children comprehend these elements of an interrogation, police believed that older youth demonstrated comprehension abilities similar to those of adults. Therefore, police officers appear to understand that children under 14 years of age have less ability to comprehend their rights and the intent of a police interview than older youth and adults, but they still slightly agreed that children under 14 years understood these elements of an interrogation. These results suggest that police may lack awareness about young children's difficulty understanding common legal terms (Perry et al., 1995; Saywitz et al., 1990) and both young children's and older youth's inability to meet the standards for adequate comprehension of their *Miranda* rights (Grisso, 1981).

In summary, police acknowledge some developmental age differences concerning comprehension abilities, but fail to apply this knowledge to the interrogation context. Indeed, a fair number of police (21.4%) endorsed usage of verbally tricky, forced choice questions where either choice incriminates the suspect, without discrimination of the age of the suspect, indicating little knowledge or application of Lyon's (1999) finding that children are likely to choose between the forced-choice answers presented by police even when none are correct.

### Detection of Deception

Overall, police demonstrated some knowledge about typical behaviors of youth and the fallibility of deception detection with suspects of all ages, yet they failed to apply this developmental knowledge to their practices and continue to use unreliable behavioral analysis techniques in interrogation. Police agree that "typical" deceptive behavior does not exist (Vrij, 2001), and believe they are only accurate about 55% of the time they used behavioral analysis to detect deception. These results are concordant with social science findings that police are no more accurate at detecting deception than chance alone (DePaulo & Pfeifer, 1986; Meissner & Kassin, 2002; Vrij, 2001). Clearly, police beliefs fail to support Reid associates' claims that police can distinguish truth and deception at an 85% level of accuracy ([http://www.reid.com/services/r\\_behavior.html](http://www.reid.com/services/r_behavior.html)).

Police officers acknowledged presence of typical developmental behaviors among children and youth outside of the interrogation context. For example, police disagreed that children/youth make more eye contact than adults and agreed that children/youth tend to sit with slouched body posture more often than adults. This suggests that police recognize behavior differences among youth of various ages. Given these responses to the DKS, one might expect that police would suggest they are even less accurate at detection deception with young suspects since this age group demonstrates different nonverbal behaviors; however, although police agreed that they do not reliably detect deception, they indicated no differences in reliability of behavioral analysis among suspects of various ages.

Most alarming is the finding that, despite police acknowledgement of the fallibility of deception detection and differences in typical behaviors of children and youth in comparison to adults, an average of 83.2% of police claimed to use body language to detect deception, without discrimination of the age of the suspect. This is especially dangerous because police are trained to use behaviors such as slouching and lack of

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6 eye contact as signals of deception and indications that they should proceed with  
7 interrogations. If police perceive these childhood behaviors as deceptive, this  
8 perception may increase the frequency with which they judge young suspects to be  
9 guilty, therefore increasing the frequency with which they subject youth to coercive  
10 and deceptive interrogations to obtain a confession.  
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## 12 13 **Suggestibility and Psychosocial Immaturity**

14  
15 Overall, in comparison to the substantial body of literature concerning children and  
16 adolescents' susceptibility to suggestion, police officers demonstrated adequate  
17 knowledge when asked about children/youth in general (outside of the interrogation  
18 context). For example, police agreed that children and youth demonstrate  
19 immaturity of judgment, less competent decision-making and planning, and more  
20 malleability than adults. These results demonstrate that police have knowledge  
21 similar to researchers about youth's diminished developmental capacities (Fried &  
22 Reppucci, 2001; Scott et al., 1995) and diminished psychosocial maturity  
23 (responsibility, perspective-taking abilities, and temperance) (Steinberg & Cauff-  
24 man, 1996).  
25

26 However, when asked about suggestibility of suspects in interrogation, police  
27 remained relatively neutral in their responses about young suspects' susceptibility to  
28 suggestion. Although the most common responses from police were that 30 and 10%  
29 of the time police elicit inaccurate statements from the use of repeated and leading  
30 questioning, respectively, police did not indicate differences among age groups  
31 concerning the frequency with which repeated questioning, leading questioning, and  
32 presenting false evidence leads to the provision of inaccurate statements by suspects.  
33 This result suggests that, although police are aware that leading, repeated, and  
34 suggestive questioning may affect the accuracy of suspects' reports, they may not  
35 know that children and adolescents are more susceptible to suggestion than adults  
36 (Ceci, 1994; Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Dunn, 1995; Loftus, 1979). Furthermore, 54.8,  
37 53.9 and 30.4% of police indicated that they used suggestive techniques such as  
38 repeated questioning, minimization, and presentation of false evidence, and an equal  
39 percentage of police use these techniques with young children as with older youth  
40 and adults.  
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## 42 **False Confession Rates**

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44 The most common response of police was that they elicit false confessions from  
45 suspects 10% of the time. This is alarming. However, following completion of the  
46 surveys, police provided feedback that although they might have acknowledged false  
47 confessions, they believed that these flawed confessions were usually unsubstan-  
48 tiated by further evidence and thus uncovered before charges were made. This is  
49 consistent with the assertion by Kassin et al. (2005) that law enforcement personnel  
50 exhibit the commonsense assumption that "I'd know a false confession if I saw one."  
51 In addition, the percentage question format asks police to respond about the  
52 frequency of occurrences as a result of *police* behavior; perhaps if questions like these  
53 asked police how often events occur as a result of *their own* behavior, police would be

less likely to acknowledge the fallibility of their techniques. As Kassin and Fong (1999) purport, law enforcement personnel are often more confident of their own abilities and judgments than others are. Future research should clarify these findings.

### **Police Reported Use of Interrogation Practices**

The reports of police substantiate that police readily use coercive and deceptive Reid Technique interrogation strategies, and just as many police employ these techniques with young children and youth as with adults. Police appear to be following Reid's instructions to use the same interrogation techniques with young suspects as with adult suspects, despite psychological research that indicates that these techniques may more frequently result in inaccurate reports from children and youth. Therefore, results substantiate Leo's (1996) initial observations that the majority of interrogators frequently used techniques common to the Reid interrogation approach, as well as retrospective reports that suspects of various ages are subjected to similar interrogation processes (Redlich et al., 2004).

### **Effect of Rank and Experience**

The differences that emerged according to rank indicated that the investigators were less aware or less likely to acknowledge the fallibility of interrogation with juveniles than officers (i.e., investigators indicated that juveniles had more comprehension skills, were less suggestible, and were less likely to falsely confess than officers). Similarly, police with more experience were less likely to acknowledge the fallibility of techniques such as leading questioning and presentation of false evidence, and less willing to acknowledge the occurrence of false confessions. These findings parallel the results of Kassin and Fong (1999) that investigators/police with interrogation experience and training are no more accurate in aspects of criminal interviewing, such as detection of deception, yet remain more confident and cite more reasons for their judgments than college students with no experience. Similarly, since investigators often receive more training about interrogation, their particular unwillingness to acknowledge unreliability of suspects' reports in the current study certainly echoes the claims by Drizin and Leo (2004) that police are not trained about how psychologically coercive tactics sometimes lead the innocent to falsely confess. In fact, it would appear that the more training that police get in interrogation techniques, the less likely they are to be aware of their possible fallibility.

### **Limitations**

A few limitations to the present study should be considered. First, the sample included police officers from only one metropolitan county police department, and it is possible that police from other departments across various areas of the nation may report use of different interrogation strategies and demonstrate different beliefs about their efficacy. The authors are currently collecting data from several police agencies nationwide to obtain a more representative sample. Second, given the

skepticism and mistrust of police about academia, police may have exhibited some social desirability bias. However, this appears to be unlikely with the current group of police officers because some of their responses are undesirable (i.e. indications that they elicit false confessions). Likewise, while an individual who is well aware of the dangers of using psychologically manipulative strategies might hesitate to admit using such techniques, police are taught and legally permitted to use all of the techniques listed on the survey check-list. It is unlikely that police felt socially undesirable effects by acknowledging use of these legal and widely promoted interrogation strategies. In fact, from the anecdotal experience of the authors, law enforcement would often emphatically state after completion of the survey, "We're allowed to use all of those techniques on the survey . . . it's not like we drag out the rubber hose!". In addition, the researchers took care to reduce police skepticism during recruitment and administration of the surveys (i.e., researchers explained that national police organizations and agency administration helped to develop the survey and support the project). However, as is the case with all scientific endeavors, multi-method convergence is of utmost importance in interpretation of results; thus, past archival data and future multi-method projects should be used to carefully interpret our results.

Finally, the sample of police included all ranks of law enforcement, although investigators typically engage in more criminal interviewing than law enforcement of other ranks. Likewise, investigators typically handle more serious, felony-level cases, where false confessions may lead to extreme punishments. Although it may be of use to focus research primarily on this group of law enforcement personnel (and our nationwide sample will incorporate data from a larger sample of investigators), there were few differences in responses across ranks in the current study. These differences indicated that investigators and those with more experience were less likely to acknowledge the fallibility of psychologically coercive interrogation strategies with young suspects, suggesting that research focusing primarily on investigators would yield documentation of more hardened police perceptions regarding youthful immaturity and interrogative suggestibility.

## Summary and Implications

Overall, our findings suggest several conclusions: (1) how police perceive youth in general and how they perceive and treat them specifically in the interrogation context may be contradictory; (2) a general view of police is that youth can be dealt with in the same manner in interrogations as adults; and (3) there is recognition by some (33%) of police that they may benefit from training about the interrogation of juvenile suspects. It is unclear as to whether police fail to apply such knowledge due to their desire to conduct interrogations in prescribed ways, whether they fail to think about such applications, or whether they truly believe there is a difference between youth in general and youth in the interrogation context (although those youth likely to be suspected of committing a crime demonstrate more susceptibility to interrogative suggestibility rather than less, Bruck & Melnyk, 2004). Future research should address such issues.

Our goal is to stimulate research by increasing understanding of police beliefs and reported practices concerning the interrogation of juveniles. If future research

involving the larger law enforcement community demonstrates a similar pattern of results, we hope to encourage the incorporation of such findings, along with other social science research, into the development of a new perspective on police interrogation and innovative educational provisions for police. In addition, until training and educational protocols are viable and widely implemented, the authors support recommendations by scholars such as Kassir et al. (2005<sup>Q4</sup>) to implement reforms mandating that interrogations be videotaped. According to the majority of police administration in departments that regularly videotape interrogations, recording of the interrogation process is a useful practice that does not undermine the investigator's ability to obtain valid confessions and may even protect the interrogator from faulty accusations of interrogative misconduct (Sullivan, 2004<sup>Q5</sup>). In conclusion, the authors hope that this first attempt at the documentation of the problem of false confessions through the lens of law enforcement encourages inclusion of police in future research and in the development of precautionary procedures that obtain reliable information from youthful suspects in the least threatening and most just way.

Q4

Q5

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