

Holistic-Cognitive Interviewing

Research at the Universities of Stirling, Central Lancashire, Leeds and Winchester has developed a new interview for use when constructing facial composites. The work has been supported by funding from the UK's Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, and Economic and Social Sciences Research Council; and in collaboration with the ACPO (police) working group on facial identification. The new interview focuses on the character of an offender's face, after it has been recalled using normal cognitive-interviewing techniques (CI). Composites are constructed much more identifiably using this Holistic-CI (H-CI). The H-CI has been shown to be effective for feature, sketch and holistic systems, and has been in police use for about five years.

Background

It is known that cognitive-type interviewing techniques (CI) improve total and accurate recall of information about a crime. Similarly, these techniques can be used to help eyewitnesses recall details of an offender's face before a facial composite is constructed. The face-recall CI, however, encourages witnesses to focus on individual facial parts, which is believed not to be ideal for face construction since this procedure ideally requires attention to the face as a whole.

In the holistic-cognitive interview (H-CI), after face-recall CI, witnesses focus on the character of the face (holistic focus) immediately prior to constructing a composite using a feature system (e.g. E-FIT or PRO-fit) or a holistic system (e.g. EvoFIT). The holistic (character) part of the interview is best used when witnesses have good recall of the offender's face. The H-CI substantially improves composite identification rates, making composites a more effective tool for policing. Note that, if face recall is poor, neither the holistic interview nor a feature system should be used (but the holistic EvoFIT can be used, see www.evofit.co.uk or tiny.cc/evofit-flyer). The H-CI is also effective for composites created by sketching so long as the facial features (to be sketched) are selected by witnesses in the context of a complete face. For further background information, email Charlie (see overleaf); the following research papers can be downloaded from tiny.cc/cfrowd

- Frowd, C.D., Bruce, V., Smith, A., & Hancock, P.J.B. (2008). Improving the quality of facial composites using a holistic cognitive interview. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 14, 276-287.
- Frowd, C.D., Nelson, L., Skelton F.C., Noyce, R., Atkins, R., Heard, P., Morgan, D., Fields, S., Henry, J., McIntyre, A., & Hancock, P.J.B. (2012). Interviewing techniques for Darwinian facial composite systems. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 26, 576-584.
- Frowd, C.D., Skelton F., Hepton, G., Holden, L., Minahil, S., Pitchford, M., McIntyre, A., Brown, C., & Hancock, P.J.B. (2013). Whole-face procedures for recovering facial images from memory. *Science & Justice*, 53, 89-97.

Procedure

The H-CI enhances face recognition, which in turn improves selection of either individual features (feature and sketch systems) or complete faces (holistic systems). Use the following procedure with witnesses and victims

- Administer a cognitive-type interview (CI) as normal, to allow a witness to freely recall a detailed description of the face. Use interviewing procedures including context reinstatement, and asking witnesses to recall everything about the face but not guess, etc. If witnesses have good face recall, the holistic part of the interview can be used, as follows
- Explain that thinking about the overall appearance of a face can help to create an identifiable composite. This is done by focussing mainly on the personality or character of the offender's face, not the offender's behaviour.
- Ask the witness to think silently about personality of the offenders' face. Please do not interrupt him or her for 60 seconds.
- Inform the witness that seven judgments will be made about the offender's face. For each, he or she is to decide whether the offender's face should be rated "low", "medium" or "high".
- Select seven adjectives from the following list (select appropriately / sensitively for each crime) and say each in turn for the witness to make a judgement
- intelligent, masculine (-feminine), extrovert/outgoing (-introvert), distinctive/unusual-looking, trustworthy, healthy, pleasant, honest, athletic (-feeble), selfishness, arrogance, aggressive (-peaceful), threatening (-safe), angry (-calm), hard (-soft), cold (-warm), hostile (-friendly), caring, dominant, attractive, competent, argumentative.
- For example, "How intelligent do you think the face is on a scale of low, medium and high?"
- Construct a composite using the normal procedure using a feature or a holistic system.

Contact

For further information contact Dr Charlie Frowd, Department of Psychology, University of Winchester, Sparkford Road, Winchester, Hampshire SO22 4NR.

Web: tiny.cc/cfrowd **Email:** Charlie.Frowd@winchester.ac.uk **Phone:** (01962) 624943