Videotaped Interrogations: Does a Dual-Camera Perspective Produce Unbiased and Accurate Evaluations?

A thesis presented to

the faculty of

the College of Arts and Sciences of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Science

Celeste J. Snyder

August 2007
This thesis titled
Videotaped Interrogations: Does a Dual-Camera Perspective Produce Unbiased and
Accurate Evaluations?

by
CELESTE J. SNYDER

has been approved for
the Department of Psychology
and the College of Arts and Sciences by

G. Daniel Lassiter
Professor of Psychology

Benjamin M. Ogles
Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Abstract

Snyder, Celeste J., M.S., August 2007, Experimental Psychology

Videotaped Interrogations: Does a Dual-Camera Perspective Produce Unbiased and Accurate Evaluations? (64 pp.)

Director of Thesis: G. Daniel Lassiter

Although research demonstrates that the least biased camera-perspective for filming interrogations and confessions is to focus the camera on the detective, police prefer to focus on the suspect. A potential compromise is a dual-camera perspective wherein the full faces of both the suspect and interrogator are presented in a split-screen format simultaneously. Results from Study 1 suggest that the dual-camera perspective eliminates observers’ tendency to judge videotaped confessions as more voluntary and the suspect more guilty compared to the suspect-focus perspective. However, Study 2 results suggest that observers less accurately identify true and false confessions using the dual-camera perspective than observers exposed to an interrogator-focus videotape, an audiotape, or a written transcript. Though a dual-camera perspective eliminates the camera perspective bias, it is not an appropriate compromise between the detective- and suspect-focus formats as it does not improve observers’ ability to accurately distinguish true from false confessions.

Approved: ______________________________________________________________

G. Daniel Lassiter

Professor of Psychology
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. G. Daniel Lassiter, for his guidance and support during my graduate career and in completing this thesis. I would also like to acknowledge thesis committee members Dr. Mark Alicke and Dr. Keith Markman for their constructive comments. Completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of my fellow graduate student, Matt Lindberg, and my undergraduate research assistants, Lisa Mieskowski and Jennifer Cassarly.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Tables</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confession Evidence</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deception Detection</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Nine-Step Interrogation Model</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Confessions</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camera Perspective Bias</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1 Research</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2 Research</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3 Research</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4 Research</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Dual-Camera Perspective</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypotheses: Judgments of Guilt and Voluntariness</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulus Materials</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table                                                                 Page

Table 1: Mean z-scores for Combined Voluntariness Index and Guilt Measures
as a Function of Presentation Format.................................................................63

Table 2: Mean Accuracy Index Ratings as a Function of Presentation Format........64
Introduction

One of the most damning pieces of evidence against criminal suspects is their own confession to the crime (Leo, 1996; Kassin & Neumann, 1997; Kassin & Sukel, 1997). Drizin and Leo (2004) report that confession evidence tends to negate all other evidence that points toward the suspect’s innocence. The Innocence Project (2007), a non-profit organization created by attorneys Barry C. Scheck and Peter J. Neufeld in 1992, found that of the first 130 individuals who were exonerated though post-conviction DNA testing, false confessions were the second most common factor leading to the wrongful conviction. False confessions were a significant factor in 35 (27%) of the wrongful convictions.

A seemingly obvious and highly touted solution to problematic false confessions is videotaping interrogations (Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004; Sullivan, 2004; Scheck, Neufeld, & Dwyer, 2000; Cassell, 1996; Drizin & Leo, 2004; Lassiter, Ratcliff, Ware, & Irvin, 2006). Four states, Illinois, Maine, Alaska, and Minnesota, as well as several cities, including Austin, Denver, Portland, and San Diego, all require electronic recording of interrogations and many other police departments across the nation voluntarily videotape interrogations (Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004; Sullivan, 2004). Videotaping interrogations is advantageous in that it may deter police misconduct. Videotaped interrogations also allow judges and juries to have a more accurate and objective record of what transpired during the interrogation. Thus, videotaping confessions reduces the number of frivolous claims of police misconduct and coercion (Kassin, 1997; Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004). The overwhelming majority of police departments that voluntarily record interrogations
favor the practice and those who do object to the practice do so because they fear their interrogation tactics would be seen as odious by judges and jurors who must ultimately decide whether or not a confession was voluntary (Sullivan, 2004).

Nevertheless, videotaping interrogations is not a perfect solution, it too has problems. First, there are no standards for videotaping interrogations. Some police departments do not require interrogations to be videotaped or the entire interrogation is not videotaped. The importance of videotaping an entire interrogation is made clear by the erroneous conviction of Corethian Bell. His admission to the sexual assault and murder of his mother was videotaped but not the fifty hours of interrogation that preceded it—during which time, according to the McArthur Justice Center (2007), police “employed psychological manipulation, numerous improper interrogation procedures, abusive and hostile questioning and, ultimately physical coercion in order to force Bell to admit to a murder he didn’t commit.” Bell was later exonerated through post-conviction DNA testing and his case led to a bill that requires all interrogations of homicide suspects in Illinois to be videotaped in their entirety (Drizin & Reich, 2004; Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004; Sullivan, 2004; Kassin, 1997).

Second, although videotaping may deter police from being physically or verbally abusive towards the suspect, it may not deter certain psychologically coercive techniques that may lead to false confessions and that are often suggested in police manuals (Kassin, 1997; Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004). According to the fundamental attribution error (Ross, 1977), people tend to underestimate the impact of the situation on a person’s behavior and attribute the behavior mostly to the person’s own volition or enduring characteristics.
Thus, it is likely that jurors will underestimate the impact that a coercive interrogation tactic has on a suspect and would therefore find the suspect’s admission of guilt as voluntary and truthful. Courts do not allow confessions elicited through direct threats or leniency promises as evidence but there is no protection for implied threats or promises, nor is there a clear definition of what constitutes coercion (Sasaki, 1988; Kassin, 1997; Wrightsman & Kassin, 1993).

Finally, the focus of the camera during an interrogation also presents a problem. Typically the camera is zeroed in on the suspect. This seems logical because many people believe that, in addition to what suspects say, their facial expressions and other behaviors will lead to more accurate judgments of truthfulness and voluntariness (Geller, 1992; Kassin, 1997). Lassiter and Irvine (1986) demonstrated that viewing a mock videotaped confession from one of three perspectives, suspect-focus (camera is facing only the suspect), detective-focus (camera is facing only the detective) or equal-focus (profiles of suspect and interrogator are equally visible) led to different ratings of coercion. The confession was rated as being least coerced from the suspect-focus perspective, more coerced from the equal-focus perspective, and most coerced from the detective-focus perspective. When setting guidelines for a national policy requiring the videotaping of interrogations, New Zealand specified that videotaping must be done from an equal-focus perspective based on this seminal research demonstrating what is now referred to as the camera perspective bias (Lassiter & Geers, 2004).

Whereas there are problems with videotaping interrogations, none of the researchers suggest that the videotaping of interrogations be abandoned. Not only do
many people in the psychological and legal communities support this rapidly emerging trend to videotape interrogations, they also advocate implementing mandatory videotaping of interrogations (Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004; Sullivan, 2004; Scheck, Neufeld, & Dwyer, 2000; Cassell, 1996; Drizin & Leo, 2004; Lassiter & Geers, 2004). However, more research is needed with the aim of designing a set of guidelines that will provide the least prejudicial manner of videotaping interrogations. Thus, the purpose of the current investigation is to determine if viewing a videotaped confession from another camera perspective, a dual-camera perspective in which the suspect-focus and detective-focus perspectives are presented at the same time using a split screen, will produce unbiased and accurate evaluations. Specifically, it is hypothesized that a dual-camera perspective might ameliorate the camera perspective bias at least for some judgments while allowing fact finders the opportunity to view the suspect face on.

Confession Evidence

In an overburdened criminal justice system, there is a drive to solve a case as soon as possible while keeping the public’s faith. The quickest way to do both is to get a confession from a suspect (Johnson, 1997). Wrightsman and Kassin (1993) reviewed several surveys of criminal cases and concluded that between 47% and 70% of the suspects confessed to the crime in question. Leo (1996) observed 184 interrogations and found that suspects who provided any type of incriminating statement during interrogation were more likely to be charged by prosecutors, more likely to be convicted and more likely to receive harsher punishment compared to suspects who did not provide any incriminating evidence. In addition, cases were more likely to be resolved through
plea bargaining and less likely to be dismissed when incriminating evidence was elicited from suspects. In an examination of several proven false confessions, Drizin and Leo (2004) found that a confession seems to make all other evidence superfluous, even negating possible exculpatory evidence. Furthermore, between 80% and 95% of criminal cases never are tried due to the suspect’s guilty plea or plea bargaining with the prosecution attorney (Wrightsman & Kassin, 1993). Research by Kassin and Neumann (1997) revealed that when mock jurors were presented with cases containing confessions, eyewitness testimony, or character testimony, cases involving confessions had the highest conviction rate. Thus, eliciting a confession is the optimal choice for securing a conviction. Though obtaining a confession seems to be the best way to convict a suspect, and a conviction appeases the public because an alleged criminal is off the streets, this “hunt” can sometimes lead to false confessions and wrongful convictions.

There are two widely believed notions regarding suspects and confessions in our culture. First, when suspects are charged with a crime and brought to trial, people assume that the suspect must be guilty because he or she would not have been charged unless police were sure of their guilt. Although base rates may show that generally those charged are indeed the true culprits, not every person charged with a crime is guilty. Second, people assume that innocent people do not confess because they cannot imagine themselves admitting to something they did not do. These preconceived notions create a dangerous situation for an innocent person who has confessed to a crime. The Innocence Project (2007) provides data that challenge these assumptions. As of July 23, 2007, 205 wrongfully convicted people have been exonerated through post-conviction DNA testing.
In 35 (27%) of the first 130 DNA post-conviction exonerations, false confessions were at least partially responsible for the wrongful conviction. Clearly, it is sometimes the case that innocent people confess to crimes they did not commit and are convicted in a court of law beyond a reasonable doubt.

Deception Detection

In the earlier part of the twentieth century, suspects were subjected to third-degree interrogations, “the infliction of physical pain or mental suffering,” to facilitate obtaining a confession (Leo, 2004, p. 39). This type of interrogation is essentially no longer practiced in the United States. Today’s interrogations are psychological in nature (Leo, 2004).

The most popular interrogation manual, by Inbau, Reid, Buckley, and Jayne (2001), trains investigators to be human lie detectors using the “Behavioral Analysis Interview,” a pre-interrogation interview designed to determine the likelihood of a suspect’s guilt or innocent. According to Leo (2004), Inbau and associates recommend asking suspects 15 questions about the crime, to ascertain whether or not the suspect is being truthful. They contend that guilty suspects tend to be defensive, display discomfort in response to the questions, and try to avoid answering the questions. On the other hand, innocent suspects are cooperative and directly answer the questions. If the suspect appears to be deceptive on four or more of the questions, they are likely being deceptive. In addition, the manual recommends looking at the suspect’s behavior. Suspects are most likely guilty if they display some of the following behaviors: avert eye gaze from the interrogator, are in a hurry to leave, laugh when responding to questions, are polite, do
not use harsh language, shift body posture, slouching, move chair away from the interrogator, biting fingernails, touching one’s hair, shuffling or taping one’s feet, crossing legs or arms, hiding one’s feet under the chair, or placing one’s hands between or beneath one’s legs. Many of these behaviors are indicators of anxiety or stress, but no research has linked them specifically to deception. Thus, it is likely that innocent suspects would be stressed and therefore be equally prone to displaying the above behaviors as would a deceptive guilty suspect.

Although Reid and associates argue that empirical evidence supports this method of deception detection, these data have not been made public. Many argue, however, that Reid and associates are misrepresenting psychological research support for their theories (Kassin & Fong, 1999; Ofshe & Leo, 1997; Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004). Research actually shows that even with training, police are no better at detecting deception than the average person (DePaulo, Stone, & Lassiter, 1985; Kassin, Meissner, & Norwick, 2005). In fact, a study by Kassin and Fong (1999) revealed that when participants were trained with the Reid method, they were significantly less accurate in detecting deception compared to participants who received no training. Additionally, those trained were significantly more confident and cited more reasons for their judgment.

Later, Meissner and Kassin (2002) conducted a meta-analysis on 6 previous studies that examined the ability of police investigators and trained participants to accurately discriminate between deception and truth compared to untrained college students. They found that investigators and trained participants were significantly more likely to find any suspect guilty compared to untrained participants. In a follow-up study
Meissner and Kassin replicated the study by Kassin and Fong (1999) using police officers instead of trained college students. In addition to finding that police officers were significantly less likely to accurately identify deception and were more confident in their decision compared to untrained college students, they again found that police officers were significantly more likely to find suspects as being guilty compared to untrained participants. They termed this proclivity of investigators and police officers to find suspects as being guilty “investigator response bias.” This is significant because once an investigator decides whether a suspect is guilty or innocent from the pre-interrogation interview, they move on to the actual interrogation if they believe the suspect is guilty. From here, the investigator does whatever is necessary to prompt the suspect to make self-incriminating statements or confess because they believe the suspect is guilty of the crime (Leo, 2004).

If investigators believe that the suspect is guilty based on the pre-interrogation interview, the suspect must be informed of his or her rights as directed by *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966). Suspects are made aware of the Constitutional right to remain silent as well as their right to counsel. Whereas the *Miranda* warning is meant to be protective, suspects often waive their rights. In Leo’s (1996a) observation of hundreds of interrogations, 4 out of 5 suspects waived their rights. In addition, suspects with no criminal history are more likely to waive their rights (Leo, 1996).

In an experiment by Kassin and Norwick (2004), 58% of all suspects waived their rights when arrested for a mock theft of $100. Disturbingly, 81% of innocent suspects waived their rights while only 36% of guilty suspects waived their rights. Innocent
suspects could be making the false assumption that by waiving their rights and “willingly” cooperating with the police, they will effectively demonstrate their innocence. Innocent suspects may also waive their rights because of their belief in a just world (Lerner, 1980). That is, innocent suspects believe they could not possibly be punished for a crime they did not commit. Another reason for the waiving one’s of rights is the “illusion of transparency” (Miller & McFarland, 1987; Gilovich, Savitsky, & Medvec, 1998). This occurs when individuals overestimate the extent to which observers can accurately read their emotions and thoughts. Kassin and Fong (1997) demonstrated this illusion of transparency. Sixteen participants committed one of four mock crimes or a related but innocent act. Of the participants who were innocent of mock crimes, 86% felt that the interrogator would accurately find them to be innocent. The illusion was also present for guilty suspects with 78% believing the interrogator would correctly find them guilty. These findings suggest that Miranda warnings are ineffective at protecting the innocent, especially when you consider that by definition, “interrogation is a guilt-presumptive process, a theory-driven social interaction led by an authority figure who holds a strong a priori belief about the target and who measures success by the ability to extract an admission from that target” (Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004, p. 41).

The Nine-Step Interrogation Model

Once a suspect has been judged to be guilty in the pre-interrogation interview, Inbau et al. (2001) recommend the Nine-step Model for the actual interrogation of the suspect. The purpose of the nine steps are to weaken the suspect’s resistance to admitting being involved in the crime, which in turn causes the suspect to feel despair, and finally
provides reasons to confess (e.g., lesser repercussions for admitting guilt or more extreme repercussions if denial of involvement continues). In Step 1, the interrogator accuses the suspect of committing the crime. Next, in Step 2, the interrogator creates a story or “psychological themes” describing how the suspect may have committed the crime. The purpose of this step is to provide a moral justification or excuse for the crime committed. It may also lead the suspect to believe the crime is excusable all together or is not punishable under the law (Ofshe & Leo, 1997). The goal of Step 3 is to weaken and suppress any denial of involvement in the crime from the suspect. In Step 4, the interrogator is to overcome the suspect’s emotional, moral, and factual objections to the interrogator’s statements. The interrogator may even turn the objections back towards the suspect, thereby directing the suspect’s own anger towards him- or herself. Next, in Step 5, the interrogator must keep the suspect’s attention because the suspect is likely to be very confused and withdrawn from the interrogation. In Step 6, the investigator should be empathetic with the suspect, urging him or her to come clean and say what happened. The investigator should shorten and embellish the story presented in Step 2. In Step 7, the suspect is faced with two options: Option 1, the good choice, is the story of how the crime was committed and suggests minimal or no consequences for the action (minimization) or Option 2, the bad choice, which is the story of how the crime was committed and suggests harsher consequences for the crime (maximization). The interrogator is to encourage the suspect to choose the good option, an extension from the story in Step 2 and embellished in Step 6. In Step 8, the interrogator helps the suspect to orally walk through the details of how the suspect allegedly committed the crime. Finally,
in Step 9, the oral statements are made into a written and signed confession of guilt by the suspect (Ofshe & Leo, 1997; Leo, 2004).

This Nine-step model is designed to make the suspect anxious when denying the accusations while also minimizing the suspect’s perceptions of the consequences for committing the crime. Suspects should not be allowed to smoke or engage in any other anxiety-reducing behaviors, verbalize denials, or vent any anger towards anyone else thereby increasing their sense of anxiety and hopelessness. Providing suspects with face-saving reasons for why they committed the crimes serves to distort suspects’ reality, leading suspects to believe the consequences will be minimal or non-existent. The final result should be that suspects change their mind regarding the admission of guilt. Instead of admitting guilt being the worst possible thing, denying guilt and suffering harsher consequences when compared to admitting guilt and suffering lesser or no consequences is the worst possible outcome. This leads the suspects to conclude that it is in their best interest to confess to the crime (Leo, 2004).

Although this model is designed to increase the number of confessions from guilty suspects, in doing so it may also increase the number of false confessions from innocent suspects (Kassin, 1997; Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004; Kassin & McNall, 1991). Russano, Meissner, Narchet, and Kassin (2005) conducted an experiment to support this claim. Individual participants were assigned to work on several different logic problems along with a confederate. Some of the problems were to be solved individually whereas others could be solved together. In the guilty condition, the confederate asked the participant for help in solving a problem that was to be solved individually. This induced
the participant to engage in cheating. In the innocent condition, the participant was not asked for help on an individual problem.

After the logic problems had been completed the experimenter informed the pair that there was a problem and needed to speak to each person individually. The confederate was removed and the experimenter, blind to the participant’s guilt or innocence, told participants they had given the same wrong answer to a problem as the confederate. The experimenter informed the participant that the professor in charge of the experiment had been informed of the issue, was very angry and wanted written documentation of the incident.

Two common interrogation techniques suggested by Inbau and colleagues (2001) were systematically varied. The first technique was minimization vs. no minimization. To accomplish minimization, the experimenter expressed sympathy and concern and provided face-saving excuses. These statements were not made in the no-minimization condition. The second interrogation technique used was the offering of a deal or not. In the deal condition, participants were told that if they signed a confession to cheating, they would receive credit for the experiment but would have to come back to participate again without the benefit of additional credit. However, if they refused to sign the confession, the professor in charge of the experiment would come into the laboratory and would handle the situation as he saw fit, implying that the consequences would be worse than returning for another experiment. Participants in the no-deal condition were not offered a deal in return for signing the confession but were told that the professor would be called to find out what actions need to be taken. If the participants refused to sign the
confession, the experimenter repeated the interrogation script three times. The primary dependent variable was whether or not the participant signed the confession to cheating.

The results of this study indicated that guilty participants were significantly more likely to confess to “the crime” compared to innocent participants. However, despite the claim of Inbau et al. (2001), both guilty and innocent participants who were questioned with the minimization interrogation technique or were offered a deal were significantly more likely to confess to cheating than were those who were not subjected to these techniques. Moreover, when compared to the use of no technique, the use of both minimization and deal techniques led to a significant increase in the number of both true and false confessions. This is important because Leo (1996) observed that interrogations used, on average, 5 to 6 techniques in each interrogation. With the use of these many techniques, the findings of Russano et al. (2005) suggest that the number of false confessions will rise along with the number of true confessions.

Kassin and McNall (1991) posit that suspects may be more likely to confess when the minimization technique is used because they assume they will receive leniency if they confess to the crime based on the interrogator’s communication of sympathy and provision of face-saving excuses. Because leniency is only implied and is not explicit, minimization is a legal technique. However, the deal technique is illegal because leniency is explicitly promised if the suspect confesses. Innocent suspects may confess simply because they know the consequences provided by the deal and do not want to risk going to trial and facing unknown, potentially worse consequences, if found guilty (Russano et al., 2005).
In another study using two common interrogation techniques, Kassin and Kiechel (1996) conducted a study in which participants typed letters being read by a confederate on a computer keyboard. At the start of the experiment, participants were instructed not to hit the ALT key as this would cause the computer to crash and lose data. During the experiment, the computer ostensibly crashes and the participant was (wrongfully) accused of striking the ALT key. Two factors were varied, vulnerability (typing at a slow vs. fast pace) and the presence of false evidence (confederate witnessed participant strike the ALT key). Across all conditions, 69% of subjects signed a false confession, 28% internalized responsibility (i.e., believe they actually crashed the computer) and, shockingly, 9% confabulated (i.e., created a story and demonstrated how they hit the ALT key). Alarmingly, the presentation of false evidence and increased vulnerability dramatically increased participants’ compliance with signing a confession, internalization of guilt, and confabulation. At a slow pace with no witness, 35% confessed but none demonstrated internalization or confabulation; however, when false evidence is provided at the slow pace, 89% confess, 44% internalize guilt and 6% actually “remember” and describe the incident. At a fast pace with no witness, 65% signed a confession, only 12% internalized guilt and none demonstrated confabulation; however, when false evidence is added to the fast pace, 100% sign a confession, 65% internalize guilt and 35% demonstrate confabulation. These findings demonstrate that people can be led to confess to a “criminal” act they did not commit by employing two common techniques of interrogation, and moreover can be made to feel guilty and “remember” how they committed the act.
Evaluation of Confessions

Given that confessions are one of the strongest pieces of evidence in criminal trials and that confessions can be elicited from innocent individuals more readily than is typically assumed, it is important to understand how judges and jurors evaluate confession evidence. When confessions are used as evidence, the presiding judge must decide whether or not the confession was given freely and voluntarily or coerced. If the confession was coerced, the confession will not be allowed as evidence. However, sometimes judges will allow the confession to be presented with instructions to the jury and the expectation that jurors will make an independent assessment of the voluntariness before using the confession as evidence. This method assumes that judges and jurors can recognize coercive interrogations that may have led to false confessions. If a confession is later determined to be coerced during an appeal, the conviction may be reversed and a new trial will take place. However, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Arizona v. Fulminante (1991) that a conviction can stand if other, sufficient evidence was presented along with the confession. When this occurs, the coerced confession is considered to be a “harmless error” and not prejudicial against the defendant, thus a new trial is not warranted (Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004).

Kassin (1997) presented 22 interrogation scenarios, all ending with the suspect’s confession, to students and had them rate each scenario’s coerciveness, the likelihood that a guilty suspect would confess and the likelihood an innocent suspect would confess. Aside from spontaneous confessions and confessions obtained shortly after questioning, the following tactics were judged to be the least coercive: informant, minimization,
questioning an intoxicated suspect, and three-day detention. The following were viewed as moderately coercive: no telephone calls, disturbing sleep for questioning, employing a minister to urge confession, promising immunity or leniency. Scenarios rated as the most coercive were: deprivation of basic needs (i.e., food, water, sleep), threats of punishment, and physical pain or discomfort. Participants were able to appreciate the pressure to confess that the scenarios created and thus predicted higher confession rates from guilty individuals compared to innocent suspects and predicted that as scenario pressure rose, both guilty and innocent confession rates would also rise.

Kassin and Wrightsman (1980, 1981, 1985) demonstrated that although participants may accurately identify a confession as involuntary, they do not always discount the confession. Participants read the transcript of a confession that was in response to a threat or a confession that was elicited through the promise of leniency. When the confession was a response to a threat of punishment, participants accurately judged the confession as involuntary and found the suspect not guilty. However, when the confession was elicited through a promise of leniency, they accurately judged a confession as involuntary but still found the suspect guilty. This result persists even when participants were explicitly told to disregard involuntary confessions, as well as when participants were allowed to deliberate in a group.

*Camera Perspective Bias*

Given the controversial nature of determining the voluntariness of confessions and the fact that confessions play such a pivotal role in the conviction of individuals charged with a crime, precautions need to be taken to protect innocent individuals who
may have succumbed to the pressures of interrogation and falsely made incriminating statements or falsely confessed to committing the crime. Many scientists recommend videotaping confessions and the entire interrogation prior to the confession because having a videotape of the entire interaction is beneficial, in general, to the entire justice system. Not only does a videotape of the interrogation provide an ostensibly accurate account of the proceedings during the interrogation, it also deters police from being abusive and it deters frivolous claims of coercion and abuse (Kassin, 1997; Cassell, 1996; Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004). Four states, Illinois, Maine, Alaska, and Minnesota, as well as several cities, require the videotaping of interrogations and many more individual police departments across the nation voluntarily videotape interrogations (Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004; Sullivan, 2004). As stated earlier, there are a few problems with videotaping interrogations as a means of protection; the present investigation explores the camera perspective bias.

The illusory causation phenomenon was first noted by Koffka (1935) when he made the observation that salient objects, those that stand out or hold our attention, are more likely to be ascribed as the cause of a physical event relative to less prominent objects, even when such a conclusion is not warranted. This was demonstrated when participants attending to a particular pinpoint of light in a darkened room attributed it as the cause of an observed increasing gap between it and a different pinpoint of light, even when attending to a fixed light.

Illusory causation was later observed in the context of social interactions (Taylor & Fiske, 1975). Participants viewed a conversation between two people from different
points of view and later rated how much causal influence each person exerted in the conversation. Results revealed that the person most salient to (i.e., facing) the participant was judged as being more influential in the conversation. Fiske, Kenny, and Taylor (1982) argued that illusory causation is a product of memory processes. However, recent research indicates that illusory causation is more likely a perceptually based phenomenon (Lassiter, Geers, Munhall, Ploutz-Snyder, & Breitenbecher, 2002; Ratcliff, Lassiter, Schmidt, & Snyder, 2006).

Typically, interrogations are videotaped with the camera zeroed in on the suspect because it is believed that, in addition to what the suspect says, their facial expressions and other behaviors will lead to more accurate judgments of truthfulness and voluntariness (Geller, 1992; Kassin, 1997). However, focusing only on the suspect presents an opportunity for illusory causation. That is, illusory causation may occur because the suspect-focus perspective makes the suspect more salient or conspicuous than the interrogator; therefore participants are more likely to judge the suspect as more responsible for the confession and hence judge the confession as more voluntary. To the extent that the interrogator is truly the cause of the confession, focusing the camera on him or her may help the participant to consider the situational influences on the suspect.

G. Daniel Lassiter has developed a program of research investigating this well-documented phenomenon known as the camera perspective bias with the aim of reducing or eliminating its prejudicial effects. However, because the bias appears perceptually based, attempts to surmount the prejudicial effects have been unsuccessful (Lassiter & Geers, 2004; Lassiter, Ratcliff et al., 2006; Wilson & Brekke, 1994). Research on the bias
has progressed in four stages (Lassiter, 2002; Diamond, 1997). The purpose of Stage 1 was to experimentally establish the occurrence and robustness of the camera perspective bias. Stage 2 explored whether or not the bias generalized from the lab to the real-world. Stage 3 examined the accuracy of distinguishing true from false confessions from the different perspective. Concluding the four-stage process, Stage 4 sought to identify the underlying basis of the camera perspective bias.

Stage 1 Research

As reported earlier, Lassiter and Irvine (1986) demonstrated that viewing a mock videotaped confession to shoplifting from one of three perspectives, suspect-focus (camera is facing the suspect), interrogator-focus (camera is facing the detective) or equal-focus (profiles of suspect and interrogator are equally visible) led to different ratings of coercion. The confession was rated as being least coerced from the suspect-focus perspective, more coerced from the equal-focus perspective and most coerced from the detective-focus perspective. A later study that included more traditional confession evidence formats (audiotapes and transcripts), found that these traditional formats result in ratings similar to the equal-focus perspective; that is, moderate coercion was perceived from these presentation formats (Lassiter, Slaw, Briggs, & Scanlan, 1992). These were the first demonstrations of the camera perspective bias and the results have been consistently replicated in later research.

These initial demonstrations of the camera perspective bias led to a series of other studies that established the robustness of the effect. Not only is bias evident in ratings of coercion and voluntariness but the same pattern of findings is demonstrated for
perceptions of guilt and severity of sentencing (Lassiter, Beers, Geers, Handley, Munhall, & Weiland, 2002). The camera perspective bias occurs with both simulated interrogations and authentic interrogations (Lassiter, Ware, Ratcliff, & Irvin, under review). Also, the bias generalized across different crimes such as burglary, rape, drug trafficking, and manslaughter (Lassiter et al., 1992; Lassiter, Beers, et al., 2002).

Dispositional characteristics have also been explored to determine if individual differences may attenuate the bias. Lassiter et al. (1992) measured need for cognition (Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarvis, 1996). Individuals high in need for cognition, individuals who are naturally motivated critical thinkers, still fell prey to the bias as did individual low in need for cognition, individuals who possess relatively low motivation for critical thinking. Another characteristic examined was attributional complexity (Lassiter, Munhall, Berger, Weiland, Handley, & Geers, 2005). Individuals who score high in attributional complexity are especially skilled at interpreting causal relationships (Fletcher, Danilovics, Fernandez, Peterson, & Reeder, 1986) and were therefore expected to not fall prey to the camera perspective bias, however, this was not the case; the typical pattern of results emerged.

Finally, Lassiter, Beers et al. (2002) employed several procedural manipulations with the purpose of attenuating the prejudicial effects of camera perspective. In Study 1, after participants viewed the interrogation, they were allowed to deliberate as juries do in the real world. Study 2 provided participants with a warning about the prejudicial effects of camera angles and participants in Study 3 engaged in a task designed to direct their attention to the content of the interrogation. Participants in Study 4 viewed a longer, 30
minute videotaped confession created from transcripts of an actual interrogation. None of these procedural manipulations were enough to eliminate the bias. Additionally, another study manipulated accountability but even the prospect of defending one’s judgment did not weaken the bias (Lassiter, Munhall, Geers, Weiland, & Handley, 2001).

The above research accomplished the goal of Stage 1 in that the research effectively established the existence and robustness of the camera perspective bias. The next step, Stage 2, examined whether or not these findings would generalize from the lab to the real world.

Stage 2 Research

Research in this Stage used a videotaped simulation of an actual trial created based on real trial transcripts and the use of professional actors, judges and lawyers for the different roles. This was done to facilitate generalization to the real world. In real trials, jurors do not simply view a videotaped confession and make their judgments, they also sit through a trial, listening to arguments from both lawyers, hearing the testimony of prosecution and defense witnesses, and are presented with other forms of evidence. Also to help generalization, the studies added a dichotomous measure of participants’ judgments. Continuous measures in Stage 1 allowed us to see the existence of the bias but in the real world, jurors must choose one or the other, guilty/not guilty or voluntary/involuntary. Stage 2 also used non-student, jury eligible community members from rural and urban communities in Ohio as participants and required 3 to 5 hours of their time.
In spite of the high ecological validity, camera perspective affected mock jurors’ judgments of the suspect’s guilt or innocence. Mock jurors who viewed the suspect-focus interrogation made more extreme judgments of guilt and voluntariness when compared to the other presentation formats (Lassiter, Beers, et al., 2002). Additionally, as was found in the Stage 1 research, judicial instructions, were powerless to prevent prejudiced judgments, despite variations in the presentation and content of instructions.

Though attempts to debias participants were ineffective, there was a glimmer of hope. The simulated trial and videotaped confession were based on a real case in which the confession proved to be false and the suspect innocent of the charge. Participants in the detective-focus condition accurately judged that the suspect was less likely to be guilty and that his confession was less likely to be voluntary compared to when participants viewed a suspect- or equal-focus confession. Participants in the detective-focus condition effectively were put into the shoes of the suspect thus facilitating their ability to appreciate the pressure to confess that the suspect experienced (Lassiter & Geers, 2004).

**Stage 3 Research**

Whereas Stage 2 established that the camera perspective bias occurs when using materials from a true case and jury-eligible community members, whether or not the bias affects the accuracy of distinguishing false from true confessions was not addressed. Perhaps actually viewing a suspect face on as he or she confesses leads to more accurate ratings of guilt and voluntariness than other perspectives. Lassiter and colleagues (2004) presented four confessions to each participant (2 truthful, 2 false). The participants were
instructed to rate the truthfulness of each of the four confessions. In order to determine if accuracy depends on presentation format, the confessions were presented in one of seven formats: suspect-focus video, suspect’s face-only video, suspect’s body-only video, interrogator-focus video, equal-focus video, audio only, and transcript. Overall participants could not differentiate between true and false confessions better than chance. The interrogator-focus video led to greater accuracy than did the suspect-focus video, the face-only video, and the equal-focus video but was not significantly different from the body-only video, audio only, and transcript.

The results of this study are representative of what is generally found in the deception literature (e.g., DePaulo, Stone, & Lassiter, 1985). Facial cues are not very indicative of deception as people are skilled at controlling their facial expressions and results of the study indicated that accuracy was lower for the suspect-focus video and suspect face-only video, thus participants may have been relying on misleading facial cues to determine truthfulness. However, verbal and body cues are more indicative of a person’s deception, as these are somewhat harder to control than are facial cues, and results of the study concluded that accuracy was better for the interrogator-focus video, suspect’s body-only video, audio only and transcript formats. This study seems to indicate that the interrogator-focus video may be the best perspective to use as it prevents observers from using misleading facial cues to determine if the suspect falsely confessed.

Thus far, the existence and robustness of the camera perspective bias has been established, as well as its generalization to real world situations. Stage 3 addressed concerns about accuracy, indicating that differentiating false from true confessions is
done more accurately when the detective is visible or alternatively when the suspect is not. The final Stage in the process explored the underlying mechanisms of the camera-perspective bias.

**Stage 4 Research**

Some researchers believe memory processes are at the root of illusory causation. They argue that salient objects are judged to be causal in an event because the salient object is more memorable than less conspicuous objects (Fiske, Kenny, & Taylor, 1982; Smith & Miller, 1979). Others argue illusory causation is perceptually mediated, resulting from how information is initially registered. Differences in point of view result in differences in the perceptual organization of an ongoing interaction, which lead to differences in causal attributions (Newtson, Rindner, Miller, & LaCross, 1978; McArthur, 1980).

Four studies by Lassiter, Geers et al. (2002) found correlational support for perceptual-mediation; that is, it was shown that people’s literal point of view while observing an ongoing interaction was associated with their perceptual organization of the information from the interaction, which, in turn, was associated with their causal attributions. As people have little control of the early stages of information processing that the camera perspective bias appears to be rooted in, it is likely that the bias will be difficult to overcome (Lassiter & Geers, 2004; Lassiter et al., 2007; Wilson & Brekke, 1994).

Ratcliff and colleagues (2006) experimentally demonstrated that the camera perspective bias is perceptually mediated. Participants instructed to hold a mental image
of the victim in their mind while watching a confession did not exhibit bias in assessments of the suspect’s guilt and confession voluntariness. However, participants instructed to rehearse an eight-digit number while watching the confession were not debiased. Taken together, these results support the conclusion that the camera perspective bias is more a product of perceptual processing than of conceptual processing.

*A Dual-Camera Perspective*

The present study was interested in exploring a new, dual-camera perspective, in which observers see the suspect-focus and the detective-focus videos side by side on a split screen. This perspective differs from the equal-focus perspective in that it allows observers to appreciate what both the suspect and detective experienced during the interrogation. The dual-camera perspective serves to appease both researchers and police interrogators who disagree about how interrogations should be recorded.

Of the three original perspectives, the detective-focus perspective seems to be the best recommendation by research to alleviate the prejudicial effects of the suspect-focus perspective because observers can no longer rely on misleading nonverbal cues to determine whether or not a confession is truthful. In addition, this forces observers to take the suspect’s perspective and more accurately realize the impact of the interrogation upon the suspect.

However, it is unlikely that police departments would agree that focusing the camera on the detective during an interrogation is appropriate. Furthermore, the detective-focus perspective provides no record of the facial expressions, demeanor, and other behaviors of the suspect that the detective may see and judge during the
interrogation of the suspect. Should detectives make a mistake, intentional or otherwise, in their judgment of suspects, there would be no record of what suspects actually did for other observers to see and correct for. For example, if the voluntariness of a confession is being disputed and the detective claims it was voluntary because the suspect was smiling and seemed to be happy while talking about the crime, there would be no way to confirm the detective’s claim if the camera solely focused on the interrogator. A dual-camera perspective videotaping of an entire interrogation would prevent missed errors and ambiguities that might result from the detective-focus perspective (Lassiter et al., 2006). This perspective also offers a sort of compromise between researchers whose studies indicate that the detective-focus perspective is least biased and detectives who believe that you need to look the suspect face on during an interrogation to determine the validity of a confession.

**Study 1**

The purpose of Study 1 was to build on the findings of the Stage 1 research of the camera perspective bias by determining whether or not the bias is present for a dual-camera perspective. Typical findings of the camera perspective bias demonstrate that confessions are rated as being least coerced from the suspect-focus perspective, more coerced from the equal-focus perspective and most coerced from the detective-focus perspective. More traditional presentation formats (e.g., transcripts and audio recordings) result in moderate ratings of coercion, similar to that of the equal-focus perspective. Results follow a similar pattern for judgments of guilt.
Hypotheses: Judgments of Guilt and Voluntariness

It was expected that, as found in previous research, the suspect-focus perspective would yield higher ratings of voluntariness and guilt than all other perspectives because the suspect is more salient and therefore is perceived to be the cause of the confession. It was also expected that the presence of the face-on view of the detective in the dual-camera perspective would allow observers to appreciate the pressure of the interrogation experienced by the suspect while still having a face-on view of the suspect. Therefore, it was predicted that the guilt and voluntariness ratings for the dual-camera perspective would be lower than the suspect-focus perspective but similar to the detective-focus, equal-focus, and audio-only conditions as the suspect is no longer made more conspicuous than the detective.

Method

Participants

A sample of 69 undergraduate students from Ohio University participated in exchange for partial course credit.

Materials

Stimulus materials. A 5-min portion of a simulated interrogation and confession of Bradley Page, a college student accused of murdering his girlfriend, Bibi Lee, created using the actual interrogation transcript served as the stimulus (Lassiter, Geers, et al., 2001).
Questionnaire. Dichotomous and continuous measures of guilt and voluntariness ratings used in previous camera perspective research (Ratcliff et al., 2006; Lassiter, Diamond, Schmidt, & Elek, 2007) were administered (see Appendix A).

Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of five conditions: suspect-focus video, equal-focus video, detective-focus video, dual-camera video, or transcript. Participants were informed that the study involved evaluating an interrogation and completing a questionnaire. Groups of up to 3 participants were seated at a table. The video or audio, depending on condition, was played on a computer monitor placed in the center of the table.

First, participants completed informed consent forms and then the experimenter read a set of instructions stating that the participants are to take on the role of jurors. Participants were also read judicial instructions about coercion in interrogations (Kassin & McNall, 1991).

Next participants either viewed a videotaped interrogation or heard an audio recording, depending on the appropriate condition. After viewing or hearing the interrogation, participants were moved to separate tables where they responded to the questionnaire with a debriefing form attached as the last page. After completing the questionnaire, participants were thanked for their participation and dismissed individually.
Results

Overall Guilt Ratings

Categorical and continuous measures were used to assess judgments of guilt. Of the 69 participants, 38 (55%) rendered guilty verdicts and 31 (45%) rendered not guilty verdicts. A grand mean of 6.00 was obtained for the continuous guilt measure (on a 9-point scale). Together, these data provide evidence of an overall tendency to find the suspect guilty.

Overall Voluntariness Ratings

Categorical and continuous measures were also used to assess judgments of voluntariness. Of the 69 participants, 21 (30%) found the confession voluntary while 45 (70%) found the confession involuntary. A grand mean of 11.84 (on a 27-point scale, with a midpoint of 15) was obtained for the continuous voluntary index (Questions 4, 13, 23, see Appendix A) indicating that participants perceived the suspect’s confession as involuntary.

Judgments of Guilt and Voluntariness

The data were analyzed in a 5 (camera perspective: suspect-focus versus equal-focus versus detective-focus versus dual-camera versus audio-only) x 2 (measure: voluntariness versus guilt) analysis of variance (ANOVA), with camera perspective as a between-subjects factor and measure as a within-subjects factor. The dichotomous guilt measure was weighted by participants’ indicated confidence in their verdict (on a 9-point scale). Participants rendering a guilty verdict were assigned a positive confidence value whereas participants rendering a not guilty verdict were assigned a negative confidence
value. This scalar variable ranged from -9 (maximum confidence in not guilty) to +9 (maximum confidence in guilt). This procedure has been validated in previous literature as a more sensitive measure of verdict opinion (Kassin & Wrightsman, 1979; Kassin, 1997). Both guilt and voluntariness measures were transformed to standardized (z) scores prior to being submitted to the ANOVA. The two-way interaction was not significant ($F < 2$), indicating that the effect of camera perspective on the voluntariness and guilt measures was comparable (means in Table 1).

A series of planned comparisons was conducted to test pertinent hypotheses. The suspect-focus perspective was significantly higher in guilt and voluntariness judgments than all other perspectives, $t (64) = 2.09, p = .041$. Approaching significance, the suspect-focus was also higher than just the dual-camera perspective $t (64) = 1.94, p = .057$. As anticipated, ratings in the dual-camera perspective condition were comparable to those found in the equal-focus, detective-focus, and audio-only conditions, $t (64) = .476, p = .636$.

**Discussion**

Study 1 results are consistent with the illusory causation literature (Taylor & Fiske, 1975). Ratings of voluntariness and guilt are highest for the suspect-focus perspective because the suspect is the more conspicuous than the detective leading observers to ascribe the causality of the confession to the suspect. When the suspect is no more conspicuous than the detective, voluntariness and guilt ratings are significantly lower. The dual-camera perspective provides a face-on view of both the suspect and the detective thereby reducing the tendency to assign the suspect sole responsibility for the
confession. A face-on view of the detective next to the suspect allows observers to better appreciate the influence of the detective upon the suspect’s confession as well. Given that the dual-camera perspective ratings were no different from those of the equal-focus, detective-focus, or audio-only conditions, Study 1 results suggest that the dual-camera perspective would be an appropriate compromise, in terms of voluntariness and guilt ratings, to the suspect-focus perspective favored by police and the detective-focus perspective favored by researchers.

Study 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to build on the findings of the Stage 3 research of the camera perspective bias by determining what effect a dual-camera perspective has on observers’ ability to accurately differentiate between true and false confessions. Previous research found that observers were more accurate when viewing an interrogation from the detective-focus perspective or when reading or listening to a transcript. Observers were least accurate for the suspect-focus perspective and a video zeroed in on the suspect’s face (Lassiter et al., 2004).

Hypothesis

Consistent with previous research, it is predicted that observers will be least accurate in differentiating between true and false confessions for the suspect-focus and suspect-face-only perspectives because observers are likely to rely on misleading nonverbal cues that result from the face-on view of the suspect. Higher accuracy is predicted for the detective-focus, transcript, and audio-only perspectives because the misleading nonverbal cues from the suspect are removed. Clear predictions regarding the
dual-camera perspective are more difficult to make. On the one hand, the dual-camera perspective could improve observers’ accuracy because it makes the detective’s influence readily visible. On the other hand, the ready visibility of the suspect could lead observers to rely on the suspect’s facial expressions in making their truthfulness judgments, which have been shown to be associated with poorer accuracy. Comparisons among conditions will be made to determine which, if either, of these possibilities is the case.

Method

Participants

A sample of 92 undergraduate students from Ohio University participated in exchange for partial course credit.

Materials

Stimulus materials. Confessions, two true and two false, used in previous camera bias research were used (Lassiter et al., 2004). These were obtained from participants in a study similar to that of Kassin and Kiechel (1996). Participants either did press or did not press a “forbidden key” during an experiment causing the computer to crash and lose data. To obtain a false confession, a confederate was used to persuade the real participant to take the blame for crashing the computer. Participants were then interrogated by the experimenter as to what occurred during the experiment that led to the crashing of the computer. These interrogations were videotaped from three angles, equal-focus, suspect-focus, and detective-focus. The detective and suspect focus videos were spliced together to create a dual-camera perspective.
Questionnaire. Continuous measures of truthfulness ratings used in previous camera perspective research (Lassiter et al., 2004) were administered (see Appendix B).

Procedure

Participants were run in groups of up to four participants. Each participant was seated at a computer and filled out a consent form. Next participants were instructed to place headphones over their ears and to read the instructions on the computer screen before proceeding with the experiment. The presentation format was systematically varied 7 ways, suspect-focus, suspect-face only, equal-focus, detective-focus, dual-camera, transcript, and audio. Each participant evaluated the truthfulness of four confessions, two true and two false. Presentation order of the confessions was randomly generated by the computer. Once participants completed the study they were thanked for their participation and dismissed individually.

Results

An accuracy index was created by subtracting truthful ratings of the two false confessions from the ratings of the two true confessions. The overall mean accuracy was -0.83 indicating a slight tendency to find the false confessions as more truthful than the true confessions. To evaluate the hypothesis, a one-way ANOVA was conducted, with planned contrasts being used to determine if accuracy differed among the formats. There was no difference in accuracy between the dual-focus and suspect-focus or suspect face-only perspectives, ts < 2 (means in Table 2). The detective-focus perspective produced significantly more accurate ratings than did either suspect-focus (t (85) = 2.27, p = .026) or dual-camera (t (85) = 2.02, p = .046) perspectives. Also, approaching significance, the
suspect-focus perspective produced accuracy ratings that were lower than did either the audio-only ($t(85) = 1.89, p = .063$) or transcript ($t(85) = 1.83, p = .071$) conditions. Together, the suspect-focus, suspect-face only and dual camera perspectives produced lower accuracy than did the equal-focus, detective-focus, audio only and transcript conditions, $t(85) = 2.76, p = .007$. The detective-focus format was not significantly different from the equal-focus, audio-only, or transcript formats, $t <1$.

**Discussion**

Study 2 results are explained by the deception literature (e.g., Bond & DePaulo, 2006; DePaulo, Stone, & Lassiter, 1985). Having access to the purported liar’s face decreases observers accuracy in identifying true statements from false statements compared to when observers only hear or read statements. This occurs because of the tendency to default to inaccurate facial cues to determine whether or not a person is lying. When observers view a suspect face-on (suspect-focus, suspect-face, dual-camera perspective), accuracy is significantly lower compared to other presentation formats where there is no face-on view of the suspect (detective-focus, equal-focus, audio-only, transcript). Study 2 results, then, suggest that the dual-camera perspective is not an appropriate compromise to the suspect-focus perspective favored by police and the detective-focus perspective favored by researchers because accuracy is no better for the dual-camera format than for the suspect-focus format and is worse than that of the other acceptable formats.
General Discussion

The most powerful and damning piece of evidence in a criminal trial is the suspect’s admission of guilt (Leo, 1996; Kassin & Neumann, 1997; Kassin & Sukel, 1997). However, false confessions were responsible, at least in part, for the wrongful conviction of 35 (27%) of the first 130 people exonerated based on DNA evidence (Innocence Project, 2007). Given these two pieces of information, it is imperative that a precise record of interrogations of suspects is made such that trial fact finders (e.g., judges, jurors) can accurately determine whether or not any confession is truthful and given freely. One of the most logical ways of recording interrogations is videotape-recording (Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004; Sullivan, 2004; Scheck, Neufeld, & Dwyer, 2000; Cassell, 1996; Drizin & Leo, 2004; Lassiter, Ratcliff, Ware, & Irvin, 2006). There are problems, however, with videotaping interrogations; the focus of the present research is the camera perspective bias. Typically, the camera is focused on suspects but research demonstrates this angle can lead observers to overestimate suspects’ responsibility for the confession whereas they underestimate the influence of detectives on suspects (Lassiter & Geers, 2004).

The present research was interested in determining if a dual-camera perspective was a suitable compromise between the police who believe it is necessary to have a face-on view of the suspect during an interrogation to accurately gauge if the suspect is freely confessing, whereas psychological research argues that the suspect-focus perspective is the worst perspective to use because illusory causation leads observers to hold the suspect more responsible for the confession as opposed to the suspect’s situation being the cause
of the confession. The dual-camera perspective would appease the police because the perspective provides a face-on view of the suspect and researchers would be appeased because the suspect is no longer more conspicuous than the detective attenuating the possibility of observers falling prey to illusory causation. Study 1 supports this line of thought. The dual-camera perspective produced voluntariness and guilt ratings that were significantly lower than the suspect-focus perspective. Ratings for the dual-camera perspective were comparable to the ratings for other more acceptable formats of confession evidence (equal-focus perspective, detective-focus perspective, audio-only).

It could be argued that focusing only on the suspect actually leads to more accurate determinations of guilt and that is why voluntariness and guilt ratings are much higher for the suspect-focus perspective. Study 2 revealed this is simply not true. Whenever the suspect’s face was clearly visible (suspect-focus, suspect-face, dual-camera), accuracy ratings were significantly lower compared to when the suspect’s face was not clearly visible (detective-focus, equal-focus, transcript, audio). Focusing on the face of the suspect allows observers to default to misleading facial cues when deciding whether or not the suspect is being truthful.

Interestingly, the dual-camera perspective improves voluntariness and guilt ratings above the suspect-focus perspective, however, accuracy ratings do not improve. This discrepancy occurs because the influence of the detective only matters for judgments of voluntariness and guilt; that is, the visibility of the detective allows observers to more clearly understand the pressure suspects endure during interrogations, in turn, observers adjust voluntariness and guilt judgments. Study 2 is the first to demonstrate that it is a
clear presence of the suspect’s face not the presence of the detective that is driving judgments of truth. The simultaneous presentation of the detective with the suspect in the dual-camera perspective did not improve accuracy beyond the presentation of only the suspect (i.e., suspect-focus perspective). Accuracy is only improved beyond the suspect-focus perspective when a clear view of the suspect’s face is not available (e.g., detective-focus, audio-only). It is concluded, then, that observers are relying on misleading facial cues from the suspect to determine the truthfulness of confessions. These results suggest that the dual-camera perspective is not an appropriate alternative format to use as a means to appease both police and researchers because observers cannot accurately determine whether or not the suspect is being truthful.

Limitations and Future Directions

A limitation to this research is that findings may have been more compelling had a larger sample size been available. However, due to low participant recruitment, achieving a larger sample size was difficult. Also, in Study 2, there is no direct proof that focusing on inaccurate facial cues leads to inaccurate truthfulness ratings. To test this, future research should examine if a false statement spoken by someone who displays some of the inaccurate cues (e.g., smiling, shifty eyes) produces higher accuracy ratings compared to when the same false statement is spoken but none of the cues are displayed.

Another limitation is that Study 1 was based on a simulated confession. It can be argued that the scripted interrogation, though taken from videos and transcripts of an actual interrogation, did not capture important nuances that are present in actual interrogations and confessions. Concern about this issue is diminished somewhat by the
recent demonstration that the camera perspective bias is not simply an artifact of simulated confessions but that the bias is also exhibited in authentic confessions (Lassiter et al., under review).

The findings of Study 1 are based solely on small portions of a recorded interrogation. During actual trials, jurors are presented with far more evidence as well as arguments by both the prosecution and defense attorneys. Future research should address this by simulating an actual trial and varying the presentation formats similar to the research of Lassiter, Geers, and colleagues (2001).

Study 2 used authentic true and false confessions; however, the stakes were low. The confessions were by participants in a study in which a computer ostensibly crashed causing the loss of experimental data. It could be argued that there were no significant consequences for confessing that one caused the computer crash and therefore suspects’ behavior during the confession would be different from that of suspects accused of a more serious crime with life-changing consequences such as rape or murder. Future research should employ authentic confessions for more serious crimes.

In conclusion, while the present research revealed that the dual-camera perspective improves ratings of voluntariness and guilt over the suspect-focus perspective, it does not improve accuracy (i.e., the ability to correctly distinguish between true and false confessions). Therefore, consistent with previous research on the camera perspective bias, it is recommended that the best format for videotaped confession evidence presentation is the detective-focus or equal-focus perspectives.
References


S. Wrightsman (Eds.), *The psychology of evidence and trial procedure* (pp. 67-94). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.


Appendix A

Questionnaire

The following questions concern your impression of the interrogation and confession. Please respond to the following questions by circling the appropriate answer.

1. The suspect’s confession was . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Given freely by the suspect</td>
<td>Forced out of the suspect by the detective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. To what degree was the suspect coerced into confessing?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large degree

3. How confident are you in your response to the above question?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Completely

4. To what degree was the confession voluntary?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large degree

5. How much would you say you liked the suspect?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very much

6. During the confession, how nervous was the suspect?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely nervous

7. To what extent was the suspect’s degree of nervousness caused by the kind of person he is?

   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large extent
8. To what extent was the suspect’s degree of nervousness caused by the situation he was in?

| Not at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | To a large extent |

9. To what extent do you think the suspect was lying?

| Not at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | To a large extent |

10. During the confession, how dominant was the suspect?

| Not at all dominant | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Extremely dominant |

11. To what extent was the suspect’s degree of dominance caused by the kind of person he is?

| Not at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | To a large extent |

12. To what extent was the suspect’s degree of dominance caused by the situation he was in?

| Not at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | To a large extent |

13. How talkative was the suspect?

| Not at all talkative | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Extremely talkative |

14. To what extent was the suspect’s degree of talkativeness caused by the kind of person he is?

| Not at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | To a large extent |

15. To what extent was the suspect’s degree of talkativeness caused by the situation he was in?

| Not at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | To a large extent |
16. Did you find the suspect's statements to be credible?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very credible

17. To what degree did the suspect set the tone of the interrogation?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large degree

18. To what degree did the suspect determine the kind of information exchanged?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large degree

19. To what degree did the suspect cause the detective to behave as he did?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large degree

20. To what degree would you say the suspect liked the detective?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large degree

21. Did you find the suspect's statements to be believable?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very believable

22. To what degree did the suspect resist giving a confession?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large degree

23. How would you rate the suspect’s behavior on the following scale?
Passive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Aggressive

24. To what degree was the suspect intimidated by the detective?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large degree
25. How was the suspect’s confession obtained?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The confession was given voluntarily</td>
<td>The confession was coerced</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26. How much would you say you liked the detective?

Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Very much

27. Do you think the detective was sensitive to the suspect’s feelings (that is, did he seem concerned about how the suspect felt)?

Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Extremely sensitive

28. Do you think the detective was empathetic (that is, did he seem to understand how the suspect felt)?

Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Extremely empathetic

29. How nervous was the detective?

Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Extremely nervous

30. To what extent was the detective’s degree of nervousness caused by the kind of person he is?

Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  To a large extent

31. To what extent was the detective’s degree of nervousness caused by the situation he was in?

Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  To a large extent

32. How dominant was the detective?

Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Extremely dominant
33. To what extent was the detective’s degree of dominance caused by the kind of person he is?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large extent

34. To what extent was the detective’s degree of dominance caused by the situation he was in?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large extent

35. How talkative was the detective?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely talkative

36. To what extent was the detective’s degree of talkativeness caused by the kind of person he is?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large extent

37. To what extent was the detective’s degree of talkativeness caused by the situation he was in?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large extent

38. To what degree would you say the detective liked the suspect?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large degree

39. To what degree was the detective intimidated by the suspect?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large degree

40. To what degree did the detective set the tone of the interrogation?
Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large degree
41. To what degree did the detective determine the kind of information exchanged?
   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  To a large degree
42. To what degree did the detective cause the suspect to behave as he did?
   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  To a large degree
43. How would you rate the detective’s behavior on the following scale?
   Passive  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Aggressive
44. To what degree do you believe the detective tricked the suspect into confessing?
   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  To a large degree
45. Do you think the suspect was being completely truthful?
   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Very truthful
46. Who would you say was most in control of the situation?
   Detective  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Suspect
47. How likely is it that the suspect is guilty?
   Not at all  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Extremely likely
48. How much stress did the suspect seem to be experiencing?
   No stress  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  A great deal of stress
49. Do you believe the defendant’s confession presented in this case was given freely and intentionally? (circle one)
   Yes  No
50. How confident are you in your judgment above?
   Not at all confident  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  Extremely confident
51. As a juror, do you believe the suspect is guilty or not guilty? (circle one)

Not Guilty	Guilty

52. How confident are you in your judgment above?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely confident

53. Do you think the suspect is basically a good or bad person?

Bad person 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Good person

54. If the suspect were convicted, how severe should his sentence be?

Minimum sentence 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Maximum sentence

55. How many truly guilty suspects out of 100 would confess in the same interrogation situation? (please give a numeric answer between 0 and 100 on the line below)

---------------------------

56. How many truly innocent suspects out of 100 would confess in the same interrogation situation? (please give a numeric answer between 0 and 100 on the line below)

---------------------------
Appendix B

Questionnaire

1. To what extent was this participant’s confession authentic (i.e., truthful)?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large Extent

2. How truthfully do you think the participant responded when asked about typing keys?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large Extent

3. To what degree do you think the confession was voluntary?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large Degree

4. To what degree was the participant coerced into confessing?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 To a large Degree

5. How much would you say you liked the experimenter?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very much

6. Do you think the experimenter was empathetic?
   Not at all empathetic 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely empathetic

7. How nervous did the experimenter appear?
   Not at all nervous 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Extremely nervous

8. How much would you say you liked the participant?
   Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 Very much
9. How nervous did the participant appear?

| Not at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Extremely nervous |

10. Do you believe the participant’s confession of guilt was given freely and intentionally?

| Yes | No |

11. How confident are you in the judgment you just made on the previous screen?

| Not at all confident | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Extremely confident |

12. When asked about typing keys that may have caused the computer to crash, do you think the participant told the truth about what happened?

| Yes | No |

13. How confident are you in the judgment you just made on the previous screen?

| Not at all confident | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Extremely confident |
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation Format</th>
<th>Mean z-score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspect-focus</td>
<td>.4068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal-focus</td>
<td>-.0624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detective-focus</td>
<td>-.0532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual-camera</td>
<td>-.1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio-only</td>
<td>-.1047</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

*Mean Accuracy Index Ratings as a Function of Presentation Format*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Presentation Format</th>
<th>Mean Accuracy Index Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal-focus</td>
<td>-.2857</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detective-focus</td>
<td>.3571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspect-focus</td>
<td>-2.4615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-focus</td>
<td>-1.1667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio-only</td>
<td>-.0769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transcript</td>
<td>-.1538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual-camera</td>
<td>-2.1538</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>