

Rapport-Building With Cooperative Witnesses and Criminal Suspects: A Theoretical and Empirical Review

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Rapport-building is perceived by law enforcement as an essential ingredient to a successful investigative interview. Despite its professed importance and longstanding recommendation within major interviewing guidelines (e.g., the Cognitive Interview, the Army Field Manual), empirical studies have only recently examined its impact on cooperative adult witnesses and criminal suspects. To accommodate the burgeoning interest and corresponding research on rapport-building, this article reviews recent empirical literature on its role and effectiveness during investigative interviews. First, this review summarizes different definitions of rapport in clinical and investigatory contexts and the various rapport-building techniques recommended and used with witnesses and suspects. Second, this review synthesizes empirical research that has investigated the effects of rapport-building on cooperative witness accounts and its impact on the diagnostic value of information retrieved from criminal suspects. This review concludes with a discussion of public policy implications and recommendations for researchers and practitioners.

Keywords: rapport-building, investigative interview, interrogation, eyewitness recall, suspect confessions

Rapport, or the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, has long been perceived as critical to a successful police investigation. In fact, major police interviewing guidelines recommend that interviewers build rapport with cooperative witnesses. Examples include the Cognitive Interview (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development protocol (Lamb, Orbach, Hershkowitz, Esplin, & Horowitz, 2007). Major police interviewing guidelines, such as the Army Field Manual (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006) and the Reid Technique (Inbau, Reid, Buckley, & Jayne, 2013), also recommend that interviewers build rapport with criminal suspects. In witness interviewing settings, rapport is thought to benefit interviewers by creating a comfortable environment for child and adult witnesses to provide more accurate and plentiful accounts (Carter, Bottoms, & Levine, 1996; Vallano & Schreiber Compo, 2011). Investigators have similarly stressed the importance of rapport-building within suspect interrogations (e.g., Kleinman, 2011; Sandoval & Adams, 2001), in which rapport is believed to be a more humane interviewing technique that can improve investigative outcomes, particularly in light of the public's growing dissatisfaction with harsh and coercive tactics used to gather human intelligence, such as "enhanced interrogation techniques" used at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay (Gronke et al., 2010). Specifically, rapport may induce criminal suspects to provide more criminally relevant information, potentially leading to more true

and fewer false confessions (also referred to as *diagnosticity*; see Meissner, Redlich, Bhatt, & Brandon, 2012). Despite these recommendations and perceived benefits, empirical research has only recently begun to test these assumptions.

In recent years, the potential utility of rapport-building within child and adult witness interviewing and suspect interrogations has received varying degrees of research attention (for recent reviews and taxonomies on the subject of rapport-building in suspect interrogations, see Abbe & Brandon, 2013; Kelly, Miller, Redlich, & Kleinman, 2013; Redlich, Kelly, & Miller, in press; Vanderhallen & Vervaeke, 2014). These works primarily focus on the definition and role of rapport within a successful interview, along with the techniques used by investigators to build rapport in the field. In this context, these articles stress the importance of rapport-building as a "necessary but insufficient condition for a successful interview" (Abbe & Brandon, 2013, p. 8).

Whereas this aforementioned body of work has been beneficial in updating the state of our knowledge on how rapport is defined and built within investigative interviews, the current literature has yet to specifically examine and summarize the empirical research addressing the effects of rapport-building on investigatory outcomes. As the topic of rapport-building gains increased interest and attention in the scientific and law enforcement community, the present article provides a timely comprehensive review and summary of the extant literature across interview settings.

Present Review

The present review summarizes the empirical literature on rapport-building, with a particular emphasis on the effectiveness of rapport-building with cooperative child and adult witnesses in the context of investigative interviews and criminal suspects in the context of criminal interrogations. First, this review briefly examines how rapport has been defined and operationalized within

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clinical settings, with a greater emphasis placed on the definition of rapport within investigative interviews. Second, this review discusses a host of rapport-building techniques and differentiates between those techniques recommended by interviewing and interrogation manuals and those techniques reportedly used by law enforcement. Third, and most important, our review addresses the following questions: Based on the current state of the literature, does rapport-building generally increase the amount and percentage of accurate information provided by child and adult witnesses, and does rapport-building generally enhance the diagnosticity of the obtained evidence provided by criminal suspects?

Definition of Rapport

Rapport has historically been studied within therapeutic contexts, because the relationship between therapist and client is critical to successful therapeutic outcomes (Bernieri & Gillis, 2001; Horvath & Symonds, 1991; Leach, 2005; Martin, Garske, & Davis, 2000; Myers & Hayes, 2006). Among clinicians, rapport is often referred to interchangeably as the *therapeutic* or *working* alliance, which implies a personal bond between therapist and client for the ultimate purpose of improving the client's mental health status (Ardito & Rabellino, 2011). Yet specifying what makes up this bond is a much more challenging endeavor, as illustrated by often vague and wide-ranging definitions of rapport, such as a "friendly but relatively superficial conversation" (Siegman & Reynolds, 1984, p. 71); "an open, interested, and warm relationship," (Harrigan, Oxman, & Rosenthal, 1985, p. 96); and "a relationship marked by harmony, conformity, accord, and affinity" (Bernieri, Gillis, Davis, & Grahe, 1996, p. 110). Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal (1990) provided one of the most comprehensive definitions of rapport, which posits that rapport includes three primary components: mutual attentiveness, positivity, and coordination. Across both broad and detailed definitions, rapport in clinical settings is generally defined as a positive and friendly relationship between therapist and client (Bernieri et al., 1996; Myers & Hayes, 2006).

Whether this positive conceptualization translates to criminal investigations is less clear. Interviewing guidelines such as the Cognitive Interview in the United States (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992) and Achieving Best Evidence in the United Kingdom support this positive conceptualization (Home Office, 2011). In fact, the Achieving Best Evidence guidelines directly state that interviewers should ask neutral questions to "create a positive mood" (Home Office, 2011, p. 17). Similarly, many interviewing researchers and practitioners have conceptualized rapport as a positive relationship. For example, researchers have defined rapport-building as "a relationship that provides participants with a warm feeling" (Vanderhallen, Vervaeke, & Holmberg, 2011, p. 112) and "a positive attitude toward the suspect and conveying genuine respect" (Hartwig, Granhag, & Vrij, 2005, p. 390). In addition, research manipulating rapport-building before (or during) a witness interview has done so by establishing a friendly and comfortable environment (Collins, Lincoln, & Frank, 2002; Holmberg & Madsen, in press; Kieckhafer, Vallano, & Schreiber Compo, 2014; Vallano & Schreiber Compo, 2011).

In contrast, recent interrogation literature has conceptualized rapport-building as more of a working or productive relationship (Clarke & Milne, 2001; Evans, Meissner, Brandon, Russano, &

Kleinman, 2010; Kelly et al., 2013; Walsh & Bull, 2012). For example, Borum, Gelles, and Kleinman (2009) referred to rapport as an "operational accord," and Kelly et al. (2013) defined rapport as a "working relationship between operator and source based on a mutually shared understanding of each other's goals and needs which can lead to useful, actionable intelligence or information" (p. 5). This conceptualization emphasizes professionalism and de-emphasizes the importance of becoming friends with the interviewee, effectively rendering the valence of the relationship irrelevant. Under this approach, rapport-building does not necessarily involve a positive relationship. Instead, rapport can be established and maintained by the presence of *any* relationship, either positive or negative, that ultimately assists the investigator in achieving the desired outcome. This conceptualization is also consistent with the Army Field Manual (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006), which states that "rapport-building does not necessarily equate to a friendly atmosphere" (p. 52), as well as the Reid Technique (Inbau et al., 2013), which implies that rapport involves cultivating a relationship by any means necessary to procure a confession.

Measurement of Rapport

Measurement Strategies

Due to the inability to provide a clear and consistent definition of rapport, it is no surprise that measuring its existence during an investigative interview also presents many challenges. Arguably, rapport is a subjective experience between interviewer and interviewee that is difficult to describe and quantify. Even more, the mercurial nature of rapport makes it possible to be experienced by one party in the interview but not the other at certain times during the interview but not others. Despite these challenges, interviewing researchers have developed methods to establish the presence of rapport between the interviewer and interviewee, either through the use of independent raters to observe the interview and classify the interaction as involving rapport or via interviewer and interviewee's self-reports of their relationship.

The use of independent raters to observe interviews and assess the existence of rapport between interviewer and interviewee has merit. This measurement technique is frequently used in clinical studies on rapport-building in which multiple observers have exhibited the ability to quickly and reliably determine whether the two parties in the interaction experienced rapport, as established by comparing the observer's ratings with the parties' self-reported experiences of rapport (e.g., Grahe & Bernieri, 1999). This method helps to reduce the demand characteristics inherent within the self-reported experiences of rapport by the involved parties, as some participants may feel compelled to please the interviewer and support the research hypotheses by endorsing a strong experience of rapport when no such bond exists. Because of this possibility, observational techniques arguably provide the most objective measure of rapport by removing these inherent self-report biases, some of which may extend beyond social desirability concerns.

Yet there are some major limitations to the exclusive use of behavioral observation to establish the existence of rapport. First, as the experience of rapport is subjective and only exists between the interacting parties themselves (see Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990), the perceptions of independent observers may be different from the genuine feelings and experiences of the actual

parties in the interaction. Second, behavioral observation may provide insufficient information to accurately identify the presence or amount of rapport between interviewer and interviewee. As such, the sole reliance on independent observers to establish the existence of rapport may be ill-advised, and this technique should ideally be used to augment other measures of rapport-building.

Based on the conceptualization of rapport as a relationship between two parties, a better starting point to measure rapport is to obtain self-reported perceptions of rapport-building from the actual interviewer and interviewee themselves. Despite the well-known limitations of self-report, which include demand characteristics and social desirability biases, it is arguably more important to determine whether the interviewee experienced rapport than the police interviewer as this will likely be more relevant to investigatory outcomes. As such, a useful measurement tool may be to examine the relationship between interviewers' and interviewees' ratings of rapport, with high correlations indicating mutual feelings of rapport and "in-sync" interviewing. Of course, it is ideal to use multiple measurement strategies to establish the existence of rapport, such as the use of both behavioral observation and participants' self-reported perceptions of rapport.

Measurement Tools

Investigative interviewing researchers have used several different measurement tools to determine whether rapport has been established between interviewer and interviewee, some of which have been used as manipulation checks for rapport-building manipulations. One such measurement tool is the Working Alliance Inventory (WAI; Horvath & Greenberg, 1989; Tracey & Kokotovic, 1989), a commonly used rapport measurement tool in clinical settings, which originally measured rapport using 36 items and was later shortened to 12 items (Andrusyna, Tang, DeRubeis, & Luborsky, 2001). The WAI assesses three major elements of the working alliance: (a) the agreement of therapist and client regarding the goals of therapy (goals), (b) the agreement of the therapist and client regarding the tasks or activities to be used during therapy (task), and, perhaps most relevant, (c) the bond between therapist and client (Munder, Wilmers, Leonhart, Linster, & Barth, 2010). Several interviewing studies have adapted the WAI to investigative interviewing settings to measure the amount of rapport experienced by witnesses during the mock investigative interview, primarily by using the bond scale of the WAI (Holmberg, 2004; Holmberg & Christianson, 2002; Vanderhallen & Vervaeke, 2014; Vanderhallen et al., 2011). These studies have consistently found significant differences between witness and suspect ratings on the WAI dimensions due to the interviewing approach used by the investigator, which differs in the amount of rapport built. Specifically, interviewees who receive a humanitarian interview that includes rapport rate themselves as experiencing more rapport than interviewees who receive a dominant interview, which does not include rapport.

Another tool adapted from clinical research by Vallano and colleagues to measure interviewees' experience of rapport within an investigative interview has been labeled the *Interaction Questionnaire* (adapted from Bernieri et al., 1996). The Interaction Questionnaire contains 27 rapport-related characteristics divided into two subscales that measure the interviewee's perceptions of rapport experienced as a result of the interviewer's actions (the

interviewer subscale; 9 items) and the amount of rapport permeating the interaction (the interaction subscale; 18 items). Each characteristic is rated on a 1–7 scale to indicate the presence or absence of a dimension of rapport (e.g., friendliness; 1 = *not friendly*, 7 = *very friendly*) and later summed for a total score to indicate the overall amount of rapport experienced by the interviewee during the investigative interview. When used as a manipulation check for their experimental rapport-building manipulation, Vallano and colleagues have consistently found significant differences in participants' ratings on most characteristics by condition (positive rapport vs. no rapport), with participants in the positive rapport condition endorsing more rapport-related characteristics than those in the no rapport condition (Kieckhafer et al., 2014; Vallano & Schreiber Compo, 2011) and a negative rapport condition, in which the interviewer is rude and antagonistic (Villalba, Vallano, Schreiber Compo, & Kieckhafer, 2013).

Despite the utility of these rapport-building measures, researchers and practitioners have yet to develop a tool specifically designed for measuring rapport during a real-world investigation. Even more, the aforementioned measurement tools have rarely been used to measure witnesses' or suspects' experience of rapport during real-world police interviews (but see Vanderhallen et al., 2011). Both areas are of significant importance to determine more accurately whether interviewee perceptions of rapport in actual investigations are correlated with investigatory outcomes during interviews or interrogations. Regardless of which measurement tool is used, preferably one established as reliable and valid within an investigatory context, we strongly recommend the use of several rapport-building measurement tools for the purposes of convergent validity (see also McLaughlin & Carr, 2005).

Conclusion

Although the concept of rapport has long been studied in clinical settings, investigative interviewing researchers have only recently begun to define this construct and empirically assess its effects on witness and suspect interview outcomes. Not only has the literature yet to provide a clear and consistent definition of rapport within an investigative interview, but the concept of rapport has also been somewhat blindly applied from the clinical to the investigative context without much theoretical discussion of the differences between the two settings. Although we believe that the fundamental nature of rapport remains constant across clinical and investigative contexts—that is, rapport is a relationship that exists between two people regardless of context—we appreciate the importance and necessity of providing a more nuanced definition of rapport that appreciates its different and more specific function in an investigative interviewing context. For example, whereas the objective of a therapeutic interaction is defined mainly by the client's long-term goals to improve the client's mental health, the objective of a witness or suspect interview is defined mainly by an interviewer's immediate goals—that is, eliciting a plentiful and accurate eyewitness account or a suspect confession. Further, whereas rapport in the clinical literature has been generally—but not exclusively—defined as a positive relationship between two people based on genuineness, trust, and respect, it is clear that in at least some interviewing contexts, the objective of rapport is to build a "working relationship" or "operational accord," which sometimes relies on non-genuine means to establish rapport. Thus, in criminal

interrogations, an operational accord may not be rapport at all in the traditional sense.

It is additionally important to distinguish between the function of rapport during witness interviews and suspect interrogations. In witness interview settings, interviewer and interviewee arguably most often have the same objective—that is, to provide investigative leads that can help solve a crime. As such, the function of rapport-building is similar to that in clinical settings—that is, to assist the witness in maximizing his or her cognitive resources to allow for a thorough memory search that can increase the quantity and quality of subsequent eyewitness accounts. In a subset of witnesses and victims, interviewers may also face motivational hurdles to reporting, such as threats against the witness or victim toward disclosure. Rapport-building in witness and victim interviews should thus be conceptualized in line with Tickle-Degnen and Rosenthal's (1990) three primary components of rapport: mutual attentiveness, positivity, and coordination.

In suspect or high-interest group interview settings, the interviewer also seeks to elicit accurate and plentiful information, with one important difference: The interviewer's efforts are geared toward eliciting suspect information that may go against the suspect's self-interest. As such, rapport-building's function in this context is to convince the interviewee to share the investigator's objectives, which likely differ from his or her own—that is, to provide potentially self-incriminating accurate information. Not only will rapport be more difficult to establish in these circumstances, but genuine rapport in the clinical sense may not be a realistic goal. As a result, rapport in suspect interviews can be more aptly conceptualized in line with some of Bernieri et al.'s (1996) rapport definition—that is, as a relationship marked by conformity and accord.

On the basis of the belief that rapport generally involves a relationship between two people, it stands to reason that the techniques used to achieve this relationship should remain relatively stable across contexts. Yet interviewers must take a flexible approach to investigative interviews, because the specific rapport-building techniques that may best establish rapport are likely based on the interviewer's strengths, the context (i.e., whether it is a witness interview or a suspect interrogation), and the characteristics of the interviewee (e.g., the cognitive and developmental differences between children and adults). For these reasons, we discuss the rapport-building techniques recommended and used with cooperative adult and child witnesses and criminal suspects.

Rapport-Building Techniques

Although many researchers and law enforcement frequently endorse the notion that rapport is essential to a successful investigative interview with witnesses (e.g., Dando, Wilcock, & Milne, 2008) and suspects (e.g., Kassir et al., 2007), few studies have clearly outlined what specific techniques are actually used in the field and whether these techniques effectively establish rapport with witnesses and suspects. A logical starting point to determine what rapport-building techniques may be used by law enforcement is to examine those recommended within major interviewing guidelines.

The most extensive discussion of specific rapport-building techniques with cooperative adult witnesses exists within the Cognitive Interview protocol, which recommends building rapport via two

major outlets: (a) personalizing the interview and (b) developing and communicating empathy. Both of these outlets involve the use of verbal and nonverbal rapport-building techniques (e.g., St-Yves, 2006). When personalizing the interview, the interviewer is encouraged to use the interviewee's name, repeat the interviewee's statements, follow up with additional questions, and self-disclose personal or biographical information. When developing and communicating empathy, interviewers are encouraged to take a non-judgmental approach, maintain eye contact, and display interest in the interviewee, possibly by a slight forward lean and verbally indicating understanding of the interviewee's situation by saying "I understand how you feel." These suggested techniques parallel recommendations of how to build rapport in the clinical literature albeit with different verbiage, such as indicating understanding by repeating back what the interviewee says, also known as *process statements* (Myers & Hayes, 2006), and taking a nonjudgmental stance, long regarded as *unconditional positive regard* (Rogers, 1951).

The Achieving Best Evidence guidelines used in the United Kingdom (Home Office, 2011) similarly advocate the use of rapport as essential to a successful investigative interview and more briefly discuss how rapport should be established with cooperative witnesses. The guidelines suggest beginning the rapport phase by briefly asking neutral questions unrelated to the topic of investigation, which are likely to elicit a positive mood. The question format during the rapport phase should be aligned with the question format during the rest of the investigation to prepare the witness for an open-ended free narrative investigative style. The authors posit that rapport-building has the potential to increase accurate and plentiful witness recall by decreasing witness anxiety and, thus, extending the limited cognitive resources available when accessing the crime.

Rapport-building has also been an essential part of child witness interviewing protocols, such as the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) protocol (e.g., Brown et al., 2013; Hershkowitz, Lamb, & Katz, 2014). During the presubstantive phase of the child witness interview, interviewers are encouraged to build rapport in two sections. In the first section, the general free narrative phase, it is suggested that interviewers build rapport through a series of open-ended questions to elicit personally meaningful information from the child (e.g., "Tell me about something fun that happened to you"; "I really want to know you better. I need you to tell me about the things you like to do"), with the explanation that the interviewer would like to know the child better. Rapport-building should then continue until the interviewer perceives that the child witness feels comfortable talking about negative events if those were in fact experienced. These supportive techniques are expected to reduce anxiety and help the witness cope with feelings of shame and guilt during the interview. Interviewers can express empathy about the difficult interview experience while avoiding expressing empathy related to the event in question (Hershkowitz, 2011).

Rapport-building and its associated techniques are also recommended by popular interrogation manuals, albeit for different, and in some cases pernicious, reasons. Generally speaking, these manuals advocate building rapport with criminal suspects by encouraging interviewers to use a more professional and less friendly approach, particularly at the outset of the interrogation. For example, the Army Field Manual implies that rapport should initially be

built by establishing a professional relationship with the suspect, possibly by providing him or her with the name and rank of the interviewer. The manual also implicitly sanctions the use of misrepresentation to establish rapport. For example, interrogators are encouraged to use a name and rank that is less intimidating to the suspect or to tailor any self-disclosed information to match the suspect's interests. As the interview continues, the interviewer is permitted to adopt a more sympathetic, relaxed, and friendly approach. However, the manual reiterates that the investigator should maintain emotional detachment that requires controlling his or her emotions. Despite its recommendation to build rapport with suspects, the manual provides few concrete techniques for investigators to use when building rapport before or during an interrogation.

The Reid Technique, a popular suspect interviewing approach used by police departments throughout the United States, recommends that investigators establish rapport during a preliminary interview that occurs before the actual interrogation (Inbau et al., 2013). The Reid Technique more explicitly endorses the notion of rapport-building as a coercive tactic to enhance suspect cooperation in an effort to ultimately procure a confession. Other than suggesting that interrogators build rapport by obtaining background information about the suspect—such as the suspect's name, phone number, address, or social security number—and using small talk to establish common ground (which the authors caution could “backfire” if the interviewee perceives nongenuine ulterior motives), few specific rapport-building techniques are provided to train investigators in how to actually build rapport. Taken together, despite their overall endorsement of building rapport, a review of existing interviewing and interrogation manuals reveals that they offer few concrete techniques to aid interviewers when building rapport with cooperative witnesses, and even fewer techniques when building rapport with criminal suspects.

Of course, these recommendations are of limited use if police do not use these techniques in actual interviews. Therefore, the more important question is: Do real-world investigative interviewers actually build rapport in the field? And if so, what techniques do they use with witnesses and suspects? Initial research suggested that police build little rapport or fail to build rapport altogether during investigative interviews with adult witnesses and suspects (Clarke & Milne, 2001; Fisher, Geiselman, & Raymond, 1987; Schreiber Compo, Hyman Gregory, & Fisher, 2011). For example, Clarke and Milne (2001) examined the quality of investigative interviews conducted by police officers in the United Kingdom and rated how well the observed interviewing practices conformed to the PEACE protocol. Not only was little rapport built during the examined witness and suspect interviews—with 47% and 40% of interviews with witnesses and suspects, respectively, not containing rapport-building at all—but the interviews that did contain rapport were of low quality.

Unlike the aforementioned studies, more recent studies support the notion that investigative interviewers do build rapport during some adult witness interviews (Dando et al., 2008) and most child witness interviews (Hershkowitz, Orbach, Lamb, Sternberg, & Horowitz, 2006; Teoh & Lamb, 2010) as well as suspect interrogations (Kassin, Kukucka, Lawson, & DeCarlo, 2014; Kassin et al., 2007; Semel, 2013; Vallano, Evans, Kieckhafer, & Schreiber Compo, 2014). Regarding adult witnesses, a survey of law enforcement's perceptions of their interviewing practices in the

United Kingdom revealed that rapport-building was one of the most commonly used interviewing techniques, with over 87% of investigators stating that they almost always or always build rapport with cooperative witnesses (Dando et al., 2008). A study that examined how well law enforcements' witness interviewing practices conformed to recommendations made by the Cognitive Interview in the United States revealed similar results: Positive rapport-building was the most frequently observed technique that surfaced in an analysis of audiotaped police interviews, with an average of 1.78—that is, the average number of times this technique was present across all interviews (Schreiber Compo et al., 2011).

Rapport-building also appears to be used during suspect interrogations. Vallano et al. (2014) surveyed U.S. law enforcement about their attitudes and usage of rapport-building in the field and found that all respondents endorsed the importance of building rapport during an investigative interview, further rating rapport as highly important to achieving a successful interview outcome ($M = 6$; 1 = *not important*, 7 = *very important*). Similarly, Kassin et al. (2007) surveyed over 500 state and federal law enforcement across the United States regarding their use of interrogation techniques and discovered that rapport-building was the fourth most commonly used technique within criminal interrogations ($M = 4.08$; 1 = *never*, 5 = *always*). Further, approximately one-third of law enforcement reported that they always build rapport with criminal suspects. Even stronger evidence regarding the frequent use of rapport-building was provided by a survey of Norwegian military interrogators' use of interrogation techniques (Semel, 2013). Interrogators reported using rapport-building more than any other technique ($M = 4.74$; 1 = *never used*, 5 = *always used*). Of course, as these are self-report surveys, these data do not speak to the extent to which law enforcement use these rapport-building techniques during an actual interrogation.

Nevertheless, the majority of both observational and self-report research supports the notion that rapport-building is coveted and used in a substantial number of interviews in various countries with little information about which specific techniques real-world interviewers use to build rapport. Only recently has research begun to pinpoint which rapport-building techniques are reported by law enforcement and actually used in investigative interviewing settings (Clarke & Milne, 2001; Kelly et al., 2013; Goodman-Delahunty & Sivasubramaniam, 2013; Vallano et al., 2014; Walsh & Bull, 2010, 2012; Zimmerman, Marcon, & Leins, 2013). In one of the most direct examinations of specific rapport-building techniques used by law enforcement, Walsh and Bull (2012) observed the rapport-building techniques used by investigators during 142 benefit fraud interviews with criminal suspects in the United Kingdom. The authors placed the observed rapport-related behaviors used by police investigators into a total of 25 categories (which they adapted from Clarke & Milne, 2001, & Griffiths, 2008). Out of these 25 identified categories, the specific techniques used by investigators that most resemble rapport-building included the following: provide an introduction; explain the course and reason for the interview, including that it is the opportunity to give an account; intermittently summarize the suspect's statements; explore and probe information provided by the suspect; display active listening, such as head nodding and verbal encouragement; maintain conversational turn-taking to ensure that both parties actively participate in the conversation; provide a final

summary of the interview; inform suspects what happens next; show equality signs by matching the suspect's style and staying on their level by not emphasizing their status as a member of law enforcement; display calmness; and display empathy. Many of the 25 techniques are arguably not directly related to rapport-building and are simply legal requirements (e.g., deliver caution and inform suspect of their legal rights, inform suspect of right to legal advice).

In a similar examination of rapport-building in the United States, Vallano et al. (2014) surveyed local law enforcement agencies to determine how their law enforcement officers and detectives defined and built rapport with criminal witnesses and suspects. Law enforcement listed using, on average, three rapport-building techniques during the course of each investigative interview and reported spending significantly more time building rapport with suspects ($M = 13.72$ min) than witnesses ($M = 9.72$ min). Most relevant here, this study specifically assessed the type and frequency of verbal and nonverbal rapport-building techniques reportedly used by law enforcement with both witnesses and suspects. Law enforcement officers' self-reported rapport-building techniques were placed into 20 different categories. Twelve of these categories were the following nonverbal rapport-building techniques, listed from most to least frequently reported: display understanding, portray a friendly demeanor or attitude, use an open or friendly body language, treat the interviewee with respect, provide the interviewee with an item (e.g., cigarette, drink), make good eye contact, build trust with interviewee, maintain a comfortable interview proximity or distance, obtain a comfortable interview location, use a pleasant tone of voice, and make appropriate physical contact with the interviewee. Eight of these categories were the following verbal rapport-building techniques, listed from most to least frequently reported: discuss common interests, engage in self-disclosure, be direct about the interview, provide an explanation of the case, be honest with the interviewee, nicely address the interviewee, be courteous, and thank the interviewee. Of all these rapport-building categories, a few techniques were most frequently reported: finding common ground via small talk, engaging in self-disclosure, and displaying understanding via sympathy or empathy.

Kelly et al. (2013) recently provided a detailed summary of the known rapport-building techniques in the field in their interrogation taxonomy, with rapport at the center of a successful interrogation. They conducted a thorough review of the interrogation literature and identified 14 rapport-building techniques used with suspects during criminal investigations: build a bond; find common ground; find identities in common; make oneself appear similar to the source; present self as in a role other than being an interrogator; use similar language as the source; touch source in a friendly manner; show empathy and concern for the interviewee and his or her situation; show kindness and respect; attempt to become the source's lifeline; use active listening via verbal follow-up, eye contact, and head nodding; allow the source to play the role of teacher; identify and meet the interviewee's basic needs; and be patient. Although Kelly and colleagues did not specifically survey or observe law enforcement to determine whether these techniques are actually used, a majority of these techniques have been independently verified by other research surveys of law enforcement or observations of actual police interviews (e.g., Vallano et al., 2014; Walsh & Bull, 2012).

Conclusion

Given the lack of clear definitions and operationalization of rapport in witness and suspect interviews, the aforementioned studies only provide a list of the possible "tools in the toolbox" at investigators' disposal when attempting to establish rapport with witnesses and suspects. Within this framework, interviewers can choose the tools they believe to be most important and effective depending on the context and considering the unique factors of the situation and interviewee. However, this simple checkbox approach, whereby interviewers use a list of rapport-building techniques, is not sufficient to establish true rapport with all interviewees across all contexts. That is, rapport-building between interviewer and interviewee not only represents a fundamental belief in a respectful interactional style, regardless of context, but it also requires a clear understanding of and distinction between definitions of rapport dependent on the interviewing context and interviewee. This understanding is consistent with the motivational interviewing approach (Miller & Rollnick, 1991; Rollnick & Miller, 1995), which emphasizes the importance of understanding the spirit and meaning of rapport before genuinely attempting to build a relationship with any interviewee (see also Alison et al., 2013).

Finally, it remains largely unknown how effective any combination of these individual techniques is at (a) establishing rapport and (b) contributing to a successful interview as well as whether the aforementioned rapport-building techniques are differentially used with cooperative witnesses compared with suspects. A few studies have begun to illuminate empirically whether and under what conditions rapport-building is beneficial to witness memory regardless of the individual techniques used, an issue we discuss in the following sections.

Effectiveness of Rapport-Building With Witnesses

We now turn our attention to arguably the most important purpose of this review: Does rapport-building actually benefit cooperative child and adult witnesses and criminal suspects? On the basis of the distinct lines of literature and known differences between child witnesses, adult witnesses, and criminal suspects, the following sections are divided accordingly.

Rapport-Building With Child Witnesses

Similar to adult investigative interviewing guidelines, rapport-building is recommended by all leading child witness interviewing guidelines, most notably the NICHHD protocol (Lamb et al., 2007). As rapport-building is recommended for adult witnesses to enhance their comfort levels and reduce any anxiety induced by the crime or the interview process, building good rapport is perhaps of even greater importance with child witnesses, who often feel intimidated by the interviewing situation or talking about the topic under investigation. That is, a child is more likely than an adult to experience anxiety about the criminal event and subsequent investigation and even more likely to feel uncomfortable disclosing information in the presence of an unfamiliar adult interviewer (e.g., Saywitz, Goodman, Nicholas, & Moan, 1991), especially considering that many children are interviewed in the context of a possible disclosure of abuse. As such, their anxiety may be par-

ticularly enhanced and, thus, can be decreased through rapport-building. Taking these unique concerns into consideration, it is no surprise that rapport-building and its effects on child witness recall and abuse disclosures has received a considerable amount of empirical attention.

Several experimental studies have examined the impact of rapport-building on children's subsequent witness accuracy and found that they promote more accurate recall and more disclosures of child sexual abuse (e.g., Hershkowitz, 2009; Roberts, Lamb, & Sternberg, 2004; Sternberg et al., 1997). However, these benefits have been shown to be time sensitive. That is, some research indicates that longer rapport-building sessions may decrease child witnesses' subsequent recall accuracy (after 8 min; Davies, Westcott, & Horan, 2000; Teoh & Lamb, 2010).

Related conceptually to rapport-building is the concept of social support. Social support is similar to rapport-building in that an interviewer initially creates a comfortable environment with the child witness, but it is different in that this environment is often created and maintained throughout the substantive interview by the interviewer's use of positive verbal feedback and nonverbal gestures (for a more detailed discussion of social support, see Hershkowitz, 2009). These manipulations generally involve interviewers who use the following techniques to maintain a socially supportive environment: smiling, using an open body posture, playing games with the child, and providing verbal encouragement throughout the interview (e.g., "You are doing just fine"). Studies using this manipulation have consistently found that a socially supportive interviewer enhances child witness recall accuracy and decreases susceptibility to misinformation when compared with a control condition that does not involve the use of these techniques (Almerigogna, Ost, Bull, & Akehurst, 2007; Carter et al., 1996; Davis & Bottoms, 2002; Quas & Lench, 2007). In addition, social support has been particularly beneficial in increasing children's willingness to report sexual abuse, especially with reluctant and less talkative children (Davies et al., 2000; Hershkowitz et al., 2006). It is noteworthy that these effects tend to be relatively unaffected by age but are potentially mediated by a child's ability to resist suggestion, which has been referred to as *resistance efficacy* (Davis & Bottoms, 2002).

Although the positive effects of social support on child witness recall and suggestibility are robust, the mechanisms underlying these beneficial effects remain unclear. Several researchers (e.g., Carter et al., 1996; Davis & Bottoms, 2002; Moston & Engleberg, 1992) have suggested that a socially supportive interviewer reduces the anxiety experienced by child witnesses, rendering them more comfortable with opening up and, in some cases, more likely to reveal sexual abuse. There is some support for this explanation. For example, Almerigogna et al. (2007) found that children with higher state-anxiety, as measured by the State Trait Anxiety Inventory, performed worse on recall measures, but only in the nonsupportive interviewer condition. Regardless of the underlying mechanisms, building rapport before the interview and maintaining a socially supportive environment during the interview has been extensively shown to improve child witness recall.

Rapport-Building With Adult Witnesses

Unlike the burgeoning amount of research examining rapport-building with child witnesses, considerably less empirical research

exists on the effects of rapport-building with cooperative adult witnesses. This is particularly surprising in light of its longstanding place in major investigative interviewing guidelines such as the Cognitive Interview in the United States, the National Institute of Justice guidelines (*Technical Working Group on Eyewitness Evidence*, 1999), and *Achieving Best Evidence* in the United Kingdom. There are several reasons to believe that rapport-building may similarly benefit adult witnesses. The benefits of rapport-building with child witnesses may certainly be expected to generalize to adult witnesses, particularly those who are highly anxious about the crime or the criminal interview. However, it should be noted that the literature has yet to directly examine this possibility with adult witnesses (but, for an initial investigation of this topic, see Villalba et al., 2013). In addition, the benefits of rapport-building may speak to a general underlying process whereby rapport induces all witnesses to be more comfortable and talk more while enhancing their ability to effectively monitor their memory, resulting in increased accurate recall at the time of the interview. In support of these beliefs, initial research on the topic suggests that building rapport does increase overall witness output or talkativeness (Kieckhafer et al., 2014; Vallano & Schreiber Compo, 2011). Further, building rapport before and during a criminal interview may benefit adult witness recall under certain conditions (Collins et al., 2002; Holmberg & Madsen, in press; Vallano & Schreiber Compo, 2011).

In one of the first studies to investigate the effects of rapport-building on witness recall, Collins et al. (2002) provided participants with a videotaped mock crime and used three rapport-building conditions before interviewing participant-witnesses about the mock crime: positive, neutral (analogous to no rapport), and abrupt (analogous to negative rapport). Specifically, interviewers in the positive condition followed a script requiring the use of verbal and nonverbal behaviors such as a having more relaxed and open body posture and voice modulation, personalizing the interview by using the interviewee's name, and avoiding any physical barriers (e.g., sitting next to the interviewee rather than behind a desk). Conversely, interviewers in the neutral condition did not use these techniques, and interviewers in the abrupt condition used more abrasive techniques, such as speaking in a harsh tone and adopting a stiff body posture. Collins and colleagues found that rapport increased witness's written recall accuracy in response to open-ended questions when compared with the neutral and abrupt conditions, which did not differ from one another on the primary dependent measures. However, no main effects or interactions involving rapport emerged for the cued questions.

Vallano and Schreiber Compo (2011) extended this line of research by building rapport before an adult witness interview and examining the effect of its interaction with postevent misinformation on recall accuracy. After participants viewed a videotaped mock crime and received either correct or incorrect postevent information about the crime, Vallano and Schreiber Compo manipulated rapport-building in the presubstantive phase of the interview, principally through the use of verbal techniques recommended by the Cognitive Interview such as making small talk and establishing common ground, self-disclosing personal details, using the interviewee's name, and using minimal encouragers and friendly body language. Unlike Collins et al. (2002), Vallano and Schreiber Compo used a mock witness interview to ask partici-

pants to verbally recall details of the mock crime, first using open-ended questions and then a series of cued questions. The authors extended Collins et al.'s study and found that rapport-building increased witness recall accuracy, primarily by reducing the percentage of inaccurate and misinformation details reported in response to open-ended questions. Rapport also reduced vulnerability to misinformation, such that witnesses in the rapport condition provided fewer misinformation details than witnesses in the no rapport condition. Interestingly, comparing a self-disclosure unidirectional rapport-building manipulation, which elicited disclosure from the witness, with a bidirectional rapport-building manipulation, which elicited disclosure from both the interviewer and witness, did not produce significant differences, and rapport did not significantly affect adult recall to cued questions.

Most recently, Holmberg and Madsen (in press) examined the effects of rapport-building on witness recall of a computer simulation instead of a mock crime. Specifically, two participants worked together on a virtual game that required finding and applying an antidote to a virtual city that had been infected with bacteria. After completing this computer simulation, participants were asked to provide verbal recall to an interviewer either 1 week or 6 months later using a script that manipulated interviewing style, including rapport-building in the humanitarian interviewing style but not the dominant one. In both conditions, the interviewer first asked participant-witnesses open-ended questions followed by cued questions about the simulation. Results provided further support for the general benefits of rapport-building to interview recall: Regardless of interview delay, the humanitarian interviewing style produced an overall increase in accurate central and peripheral details reported compared with the dominant interviewing style. Although the authors described the humanitarian interviewing style as involving rapport-building whereas the dominant interviewing style did not, these approaches differed in several other ways, such as the amount of time allowed for witnesses to recall the crime. Therefore, it is unclear whether interviewers may have used additional interviewing techniques in the humanitarian condition that benefitted participants' responses. It should be noted that because of the use of two participants actively engaging in a computer simulation instead of a mock crime and the authors' reported inability to code the recall data for inaccuracy, it is difficult to compare these results with those of Collins et al. (2002) and Vallano and Schreiber Compo (2011).

Surprisingly, recent studies extending the investigation of rapport's effects on witness recall have failed to consistently replicate these beneficial effects. For example, Kieckhafer et al. (2014) used the same rapport-building and misinformation manipulations as Vallano and Schreiber Compo (2011) while also manipulating when rapport was built: either before misinformation or after misinformation. Unlike Vallano and Schreiber Compo, the authors found that rapport per se did not benefit witness memory and was only beneficial to witness recall when built before the presentation of misinformation, not after its presentation. In fact, rapport overall was even found to exert a negative influence on witness recall compared with the no rapport condition by increasing the amount of other false details. This absence of a main effect of rapport on eyewitness recall and an increase in other false details has also been found in subsequent studies using similar manipulations and designs but adding a 1-week delay between rapport and witness

recall (Kieckhafer, 2014) or experimentally inducing anxiety (Villalba et al., 2013).

In summary, the emerging research on rapport-building in the context of adult witness interviewing has yielded an inconclusive pattern of findings regarding its effect on cooperative witness recall. At best, it appears that the potential benefits of rapport-building may vary by context—for example, whether rapport is built before or after misinformation, whether rapport is built in close proximity to the criminal interview, and whether the witness is asked open-ended or cued questions. At worst, rapport may have no effect or may actually have a detrimental effect on witness recall under certain conditions by increasing the amount of other false information reported. In addition, the underlying mechanism through which rapport exerts these effects remains unclear. To date, the research only partially supports the hypothesis that rapport-building reduces state anxiety, leading to enhanced recall—that is, rapport appears to reduce state anxiety before retrieval, but this decrease is not the cause of any recall benefits (Kieckhafer, 2014; Kieckhafer et al., 2014; Villalba et al., 2013).

It is possible that this initial set of mixed findings is the result of the different procedures used in these studies that have investigated rapport-building. For example, unlike Collins et al. (2002), who asked participants to provide written recall of the mock crime, Vallano & Schreiber Compo (2011) asked participants to provide verbal recall of the mock crime. Kieckhafer et al. (2014) manipulated rapport-building before and after the presentation of misinformation, and Villalba et al. (2013) used a different mock crime altogether. Holmberg and Madsen (in press) did not use a mock crime, nor did they assess the effects of rapport-building on participants' reporting of inaccurate details.

The inability to consistently replicate the beneficial effects of rapport-building may also be attributable to the lack of ecological validity inherent in most laboratory studies testing the effects of rapport on memory for a nonanxiety-producing videotaped event. A brief conversation with an uninterested stranger about a clearly fake crime may be insufficient to induce a strong motivation to connect with an interviewer and, as a result, build a strong enough rapport to robustly produce the predicted benefits, and this may thus lead to inconsistent results. However, recent research inducing high levels of anxiety assumed to parallel more real-world anxiety levels at the time of an interview was also unable to replicate an advantage of rapport-building in witness recall (Villalba et al., 2013). In addition, many of these studies have most often used female undergraduates to interview other female undergraduates, a scenario hardly representative of real-world police interviewing scenarios, which often involve male interviewers. Further, unlike what is encountered in most experimental lab settings, real-world interviewers are most often associated with legitimate authority and police power.

The comparison of rapport-building with a no rapport control condition could also dilute the effects of rapport. That is, building a positive or working relationship may be advantageous only when compared with a negative relationship, in which the interviewer may create feelings of antipathy or active dislike toward the interviewee, as opposed to a neutral or no rapport-building condition in which interviewees may be indifferent toward the interviewer. Vallano and colleagues have generally compared rapport to a control condition involving no rapport (not negative or abrupt rapport, as in Collins et al., 2002). Similarly, establishing rapport

only before but not during the criminal interview could further dilute its effects on witness recall. Vallano & Schreiber Compo (2011) built rapport before the substantive phase of the criminal interview with no specific instructions to interviewers to maintain rapport throughout the substantive phase of the criminal interview. In contrast, other studies (e.g., Collins et al., 2002; Holmberg & Madsen, *in press*) established and maintained rapport throughout the interview, as rapport maintenance is also considered crucial to reaping its benefits (Walsh & Bull, 2012). In particular, Walsh and Bull (2012) examined real-world investigative interviews and found that rapport-building exerted its strongest benefits on investigatory outcomes only when maintained throughout the entire criminal interview. Thus, it is possible that rapport-building may more consistently exert positive benefits when initially established and maintained throughout the interview.

Rapport-Building With Criminal Suspects

Rapport-building is also held in high esteem by practitioners (e.g., Kleinman, 2011), major investigatory guidelines such as Achieving Best Evidence in the United Kingdom and the Army Field Manual in the United States, and researchers, who espouse its benefits with criminal suspects (Abbe & Brandon, 2013; Kelly et al., 2013; Meissner et al., 2012). In fact, rapport-building is believed to be at the center of most if not all successful interrogations, with the effectiveness of all other techniques depending on the interviewer's ability to build rapport with the suspect (Kelly et al., 2013; Vanderhallen & Vervaeke, 2014). In this context, success is often defined as the resolution of a case, either the byproduct of investigatory leads or a suspect confession.

Although researchers and practitioners agree on the importance of rapport-building, advocate its use during investigative interviews, and are likely to actually use rapport-building techniques during suspect interrogations (see Kassir et al., 2007; Semel, 2013; Vallano et al., 2014), few studies directly speak to its direct effectiveness on interrogation outcomes—that is, its effects on the amount and accuracy of incriminating evidence revealed—or the diagnosticity of the produced confessions—that is, the number and proportion of true versus false confessions.

There are several reasons to believe that rapport-building enhances the amount and quality of information obtained from suspect interrogations. First, as discussed, rapport-building exerts an overall positive benefit on child and adult witness recall. Therefore, it is likely that these benefits may generalize to other investigative interviewing settings such as suspect interrogations, possibly by motivating the suspect to provide the interviewer with helpful information in the form of investigatory leads. Second, just as rapport-building benefits adult witnesses by enhancing cooperation and facilitating conversation (e.g., via assisting witnesses in opening up and talking more), these same mechanisms may result in an increase of true confessions by rendering the guilty more comfortable to confess and the innocent more comfortable to maintain their innocence and resist any suggestions of guilt. In other words, rapport may indirectly increase true confessions by increasing a guilty suspect's likelihood to talk and thus introduce incriminating information, which can later be challenged by a skilled interrogator. This same risk may not apply to truly innocent suspects whose increased true storytelling is unlikely to increase incriminating information.

There is empirical evidence supporting the conclusion that rapport-building may benefit suspect interrogations by enhancing the amount of diagnostic information produced by criminal suspects (Bull & Soukara, 2010; Meissner, Russano, Rigoni, & Horgan, unpublished research; Narchet, Meissner, & Russano, 2011; Walsh & Bull, 2010, 2012). Most notably, Meissner et al. (2012) recently conducted a meta-analysis including both field (five) and laboratory studies (12) that examined the effects of interviewing style (information gathering vs. accusatorial) on interrogation outcomes. The information-gathering approach typically involves rapport-building, the use of open-ended exploratory questions to obtain information, and direct positive confrontation to elicit confessions. In contrast, the accusatorial approach is more akin to the Reid Technique, which recommends building rapport only before the actual interrogation to make the suspect more susceptible to psychologically coercive techniques used during the interrogation to elicit confessions, such as maximization and minimization.

The field studies included in the Meissner et al. (2012) meta-analysis investigated the general relationship between interviewing approach and interrogation outcomes (e.g., Bull & Soukara, 2010; Leo, 1996; Walsh & Bull, 2012). The field study most relevant to this issue was conducted by Walsh and Bull (2012), who found that whether rapport was initially established before the criminal interview during the engage-and-explain phase bore no significant relationship to investigatory outcomes such as the amount of incriminating information presented by suspects. However, whether rapport existed between interviewer and suspect when they provided an account of the incident (the account phase) was significantly related to overall interview quality and outcomes. For example, establishing a strong rapport in the account phase compared with weak or no rapport was significantly more likely to produce a comprehensive account of the crime, including a full confession. The authors concluded that interviewers should not only be concerned with establishing rapport at the outset of the interview but should be even more concerned with maintaining this rapport throughout the interview to obtain the most accurate and positive case resolution.

Several of the other experimental studies included in the Meissner et al. (2012) meta-analysis directly manipulated and compared the efficacy of an information-gathering interviewing approach with an accusatorial interviewing approach (Meissner, Russano, Rigoni, & Horgan, 2011; Narchet, Meissner, & Russano, *in press*). For example, Meissner et al. (unpublished research) examined the effects of three different interviewing approaches—accusatorial, information gathering, and control—on investigatory outcomes with both guilty and innocent suspects. Overall, the information-gathering approach, which included rapport-building, proved to be the superior approach by increasing true confessions and reducing false confessions. Narchet et al. (2011) used a similar design to experimentally compare the information-gathering and accusatorial approaches, also finding that the former reduced false confessions compared with the accusatorial approach. More directly related to rapport-building and not included in this meta-analysis, Evans, Houston, and Meissner (2012) manipulated different questioning approaches (rapport, direct, and control) to determine their respective effects on information gain. Results indicated that the rapport-based and direct questioning approach were both superior to the control approach in producing more information.

Although the studies cited in the Meissner et al. (2012) meta-analysis certainly provide initial support for the notion that

information-gathering approaches are superior to accusatorial approaches in producing successful investigatory outcomes, a few caveats are in order before automatically attributing these benefits to rapport-building. First, as noted by Meissner et al. (2012) and similar to the literature on rapport's effect in adult witness contexts, this literature is in its infancy. Of the 17 studies included in the meta-analysis, only a few directly assessed the effects of rapport-building on investigatory outcomes, and one of the studies addressed in this review was conducted after the meta-analysis (Evans et al., 2012). Instead, many of the included studies manipulated interrogation techniques that were classified as coercive (and unrelated to rapport-building, such as presenting false evidence and maximization and minimization; Kassin & Kiechel, 1996; Perillo & Kassin, 2011) and measured their effects on information gain, including true and false confession rates. Arguably, manipulating the effects of general interviewing approaches that may or may not include rapport-building is insufficient to draw conclusions about the specific effects of rapport-building on investigatory outcomes.

A related line of research not addressed in Meissner et al.'s (2012) meta-analysis has investigated the potential benefits of a humane interviewing approach on interrogation outcomes. A humane interviewing approach is similar to an information-gathering approach in that both styles emphasize the conveyance of understanding and empathy toward the suspect during the interrogation, and it has been shown to increase the amount of diagnostic information obtained during an investigative interview when compared with a dominant interviewing style, which is similar to the accusatorial approach in that it is more aggressive and confrontational in nature (Holmberg & Christianson, 2002; Kebbell, Hurren, & Roberts, 2006; Oxburgh & Ost, 2011). For example, Kebbell et al. (2006) interviewed convicted sex offenders about their interrogation experiences, and those who confessed to their crimes were more likely to retrospectively describe being interviewed in a more humanitarian than dominant style. Relatedly, Holmberg and Christianson (2002) surveyed convicted sex offenders and murderers, finding that a humanitarian interviewing style compared with a dominant style was more strongly correlated with true confessions.

Taken together, the research examining different "friendly" suspect interviewing approaches—whether they be labeled humanitarian, empathic, or information gathering—strongly suggests that the inclusion of rapport-building before and especially during suspect interrogations can benefit outcomes by increasing the production of diagnostic evidence in a variety of contexts. This assumption is based on the notion that information-gathering or humanitarian interviewing approaches are more likely to involve rapport-building than an accusatorial or dominant interviewing approach. Unfortunately, however, none of the above-referenced studies directly manipulated rapport-building to determine whether this specific technique, or any other specific technique used within these approaches, may have produced the obtained investigatory benefits. Instead, most of this research examined the effects of different interviewing approaches and investigatory outcomes, with each approach simultaneously including many different interviewing techniques. As a result, it is unclear which of the techniques used or combination thereof in the information-gathering interview approach is responsible for its beneficial outcomes.

Due to these methodological limitations, it is possible that building rapport at the beginning of the interview may shift the interviewer's mindset and change the subsequent use of techniques employed to gather information. That is, rapport-building may engender an immersion in the information-gathering approach, which is likely to elicit more information and improve overall interview quality. As such, interviewers who build rapport may also be more likely to better utilize silence, wait longer for the interviewee to speak resulting in fewer interruptions, and avoid more coercive tactics that may cause a suspect not to disclose information. Therefore, rapport-building per se may not be producing these benefits, but rather the information-gathering approach that induces an investigator to conduct a better interview.

Further, despite the previously cited research and myriad reasons to expect that rapport will exert positive benefits on investigatory outcomes, plausible reasons exist to expect just the opposite. It remains possible that rapport-building may increase false confessions by serving as a form of entryway for other techniques along the lines of social influence (Abbe & Brandon, 2013; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004) that enhance a suspect's desire to please the interviewer by providing information, some (if not all) of which may be inaccurate or misleading. In addition, rapport, when built in conjunction with other coercive techniques, may amplify the negative effects of these misleading techniques by making the suspect more susceptible to accepting false information presented by law enforcement. For example, rapport may serve to "butter up" a suspect to put their guard down and fall prey to coercive techniques such as the introduction of false evidence or maximization, particularly in the case of vulnerable suspects. Further, rapport could reduce true confessions by creating such a safe and comfortable environment that suspects do not realize the gravity of their situation or feel the pressure necessary to confess.

It is not our intention to highlight these limitations in an effort to completely discount the research that provides support for the positive effects of rapport-building on interrogation outcomes. Instead, on the basis of the reviewed research, we acknowledge and support the promise of rapport-building on interrogation outcomes but simply believe it is important to raise these issues and alternative possibilities to the potential effects of rapport-building, particularly given the infancy of this area of research and the absence of research that has directly manipulated the impact of rapport-building on investigatory outcomes.

General Conclusion

As it currently remains unclear if and how rapport building may benefit investigatory outcomes in police interviews, it is paramount that researchers create a reliable and valid definition of rapport in this context as a guideline for specific research on rapport's potential benefits when interviewing witnesses and suspects. Within the investigative interviewing literature, rapport has not yet been adequately conceptualized to allow for a reliable determination of its effects. Consequently, the inability to define this construct and define it in a consistent manner makes it difficult to interpret the impact of rapport within investigations, because studies examining rapport have used different conceptual and operational definitions. A more consistent operationalization of rapport in interviewing research would also help avoid stimulus sampling problems whereby inconsistencies regarding the effec-

tiveness of rapport stem from the unique operational definitions of rapport used in a given study or even the misapplication of the term altogether.

Implications for Research

Because of the paucity of literature on rapport within criminal contexts, there are several aspects of rapport-building that necessitate further exploration to expand our knowledge of its role within criminal investigations. At a basic level, we still have scant knowledge about what rapport actually is. In the clinical and investigative interviewing literature, the wide-ranging and mercurial definitions of rapport often provide little specificity and consistency regarding its core characteristics and whether it is differentially defined and built depending on the characteristics of the interview and interviewee. Although in therapeutic settings, rapport generally involves a genuine relationship between two people that involves communication and trust, we know relatively little about the definition of rapport-building across different contexts and even less about how real-world investigators conceptualize rapport-building.

Although the limited research on this topic suggests that many law enforcement personnel define rapport similarly to clinicians, a significant number of police interviewers also conceptualize rapport as a “working” or “productive” relationship that may be either positive or negative (see [Evans et al., 2010](#); [Vallano et al., 2014](#)). This issue raises important questions about the fundamental nature of rapport that should be addressed by future research: Depending on the interviewing context, does rapport involve a positive relationship, positive or negative relationship, or any relationship regardless of valence? Further, is rapport either present or absent, or is some level of rapport always present that varies in degree—that is, along a continuum with positive and negative or weak and strong rapport at respective endpoints? Does the nature of this construct differ by context (e.g., therapeutic vs. investigatory)? This issue also raises important practical questions about how investigators themselves define and operationalize rapport that should be addressed by future research, as this will likely ensure bidirectionality of research–practitioner transfer of knowledge and guide the techniques real-world investigators use to establish rapport during investigative interviews.

A related issue is whether and how rapport-building is measured in research and applied settings. The development of a reliable and valid rapport measure specifically designed for an investigative setting is essential to establish whether rapport is present or absent or how much rapport is experienced by and between the interviewer and interviewee. Such a measure could be used by researchers as a manipulation check to measure the experience of rapport during experiments and by practitioners to determine whether they are sufficiently building rapport. Even more, such a measure would allow for a more comprehensive assessment of both interviewer and interviewee perceptions of rapport permeating the investigative interview, another area for future research (but for an initial examination of interviewers’ and interviewees’ perceptions of rapport, see [Vanderhallen et al., 2011](#)). As rapport is only useful if perceived by the interviewee, research should continue to examine whether interviewers perceive different amounts of rapport during the interview. To this end, we advocate

for more interviewing research to incorporate rapport as a primary or secondary dependent measure.

Just as we have little knowledge regarding the construct of rapport and its measurement, there is even less knowledge regarding the specific techniques used by law enforcement to build rapport during criminal investigations. It is imperative, for the purposes of ecological validity, that researchers create manipulations that simulate the rapport-building techniques actually used by law enforcement. Therefore, more in-depth and specific investigation of the individual techniques used to build rapport with witnesses and suspects are needed to determine how these techniques align not only with current interviewing guidelines and recommendations but also with research that has been and will be conducted on the subject. In addition, it will be important for future research to disentangle which rapport-building techniques most effectively contribute to both interviewees’ and investigators’ perceptions of rapport. Many investigators may be using techniques that do not contribute to interviewees’ perception of rapport, and they could therefore be trained on how to build a better rapport using empirically effective techniques.

Further, research needs to address which techniques have the greatest impact on investigatory outcomes, such as the quantity and quality of the obtained information, and under which conditions. We believe that it is unlikely that the same rapport-building techniques will be equally effective with all interviewees in all contexts. Although a few general rapport-building techniques may work well for most criminal interviewees in most criminal contexts, the impact of the majority of rapport-building techniques likely vary by characteristics of the interviewee and situation. Therefore, researchers should conduct a more in-depth examination of the dispositional and situational intricacies that affect the impact of rapport-building on investigative outcomes. This research would shed light on what rapport-building techniques are generally effective with most witnesses and suspects—or differentially effective with witnesses and suspects—and those techniques that are more sensitive to characteristics of the parties and the situation. With this knowledge, investigators could better determine what general techniques they should consistently use to build rapport and how much those techniques contribute to the rapport between themselves and the interviewee as well as what techniques may be more situation dependent.

In a similar vein, little is known about contextual factors that affect whether investigators choose to build rapport and, if so, what techniques they use during investigative interviews. There is initial evidence that investigators do not always build rapport because they do not perceive it as an effective technique in certain situations, such as low-level crimes, or with certain interviewees—for example, career criminals ([Vallano et al., 2014](#)). However, little is known regarding how these factors affect investigators’ decisions to build rapport and their decisions regarding what rapport-building techniques to use during a police interview. With rapport as a dynamic interplay between interviewer and interviewee, future field and lab-based studies should empirically assess which rapport-building techniques are most and least effective in certain contexts and with certain individuals.

In sum, future research should more thoroughly examine how investigators decide which rapport-building techniques to use and whether these decisions and their chosen rapport-building techniques are effective at (a) establishing rapport and (b) producing

improved investigatory outcomes. It is possible that investigators fail to build rapport when it may actually be of great importance, therefore missing valuable opportunities to obtain key information to successfully resolve cases. In addition, it is possible that investigators who attempt to establish rapport use ineffective techniques, rendering their good intentions useless.

Certainly, the foregoing issues are of high significance, but arguably the most important issue for future research is the overall impact of rapport-building on adult witness recall during investigative interviews. Despite rapport-building's long-standing role in witness interviewing guidelines, the initial research paints an inconsistent picture of its effect on adult witness recall, with some studies suggesting that rapport benefits adult witness recall and others failing to replicate those findings, even indicating some possible detriments associated with rapport-building. Future research should also address the effect of rapport on the richness and precision of eyewitness reports. Perhaps rapport does not exert consistent and positive effects on the typical outcome measures of overall quantity and quality of information reported but, instead, allows witnesses to provide more detailed and concise eyewitness accounts. In addition, future research should continue to address in what contexts rapport-building may be a benefit or possibly a detriment to the quality and quantity of information reported by interviewees. For example, is rapport most beneficial when built at the crime scene (during consolidation) or right before the interview (at retrieval)? Does rapport benefit investigatory outcomes before or after a witness or suspect receives misinformation (see [Kieckhafer et al., 2014](#))? These issues are of great significance to first responders who initially interact with a witness or a suspect and may want to establish rapport to inoculate a witness against subsequent misinformation as well as to investigative interviewers interacting with a witness or a suspect much later in an investigation when rapport may serve to enhance metacognitive monitoring and reduce anxiety, thus enhancing a witness's overall recall. At the current point in time however, the longstanding recommendation of rapport-building in international adult witness interviewing guidelines is somewhat perplexing given the lack of empirical research and the mixed set of initial findings.

Another important area for future research is a more thorough investigation of the underlying mechanisms that may explain the inconsistent effects of rapport-building with adult witnesses. In studies in which rapport has been found to enhance eyewitness memory, it is still unclear why rapport should and sometimes does affect adult eyewitness recall in a positive or negative manner. [Kieckhafer et al. \(2014\)](#) and [Villalba et al. \(2013\)](#) explored the possibility that rapport improves eyewitness recall by serving as an anxiety-reduction technique. As such, these studies measured and manipulated state anxiety and rapport to determine its effect on recall accuracy. Although both studies found that rapport corresponded with a reduction in anxiety, this reduction did not translate to enhanced eyewitness recall. As a result, additional theoretical explanations need to be explored, both social and cognitive in nature. In a social context, perhaps rapport-building operates as a form of social influence and motivates witnesses to try harder to help the interviewer and provide more information or, conversely, increases the likelihood that witnesses will acquiesce to misleading suggestions. In a cognitive context, perhaps rapport-building improves metacognitive monitoring or source monitoring capacity, particularly in the presence of misinformation (for a more detailed discussion regarding the potential role of these underlying mechanisms, see [Kieckhafer et al., 2014](#)).

There is even less research regarding the effects of rapport-building on the evidence obtained from criminal suspects. Although rapport-building is commonly recommended by researchers and practitioners alike, there is at best only indirect support for its benefits on interrogation outcomes. The research that does exist is mostly correlational, and the experimental studies manipulating interview approach, such as humanitarian versus confrontational, inexorably confound the effects of rapport-building with other techniques contained within these general interviewing approaches, such as the use of open-ended questions. Future studies should thus isolate the independent effects of rapport-building during criminal interrogations to determine whether it is a benefit or a detriment and how it affects the impact of other concurrently used investigatory techniques—for example, minimization and maximization—on investigatory outcomes. Despite its long-standing role in suspect interviewing, the possibility exists that rapport-building may have no effects or detrimental effects on the diagnosticity of evidentiary output, possibly by rendering already suggestive or coercive techniques even more suggestive. Further, rapport could reduce true confessions by creating such a safe and comfortable environment that suspects may not realize the gravity of their situation or feel the pressure necessary to confess. As strong as the temptation may be to anoint rapport-building as the most humane and diagnostic investigative interviewing technique, the possibility that it is not a diagnostic technique and can produce negative and counterintuitive outcomes should be explored, particularly given the paucity of research directly assessing its impact.

As discussed, the possibility also exists that rapport may not be beneficial to all suspects in all contexts. In fact, it is likely that the use and effects of rapport-building, as with most interrogation techniques, are context dependent. As such, understanding, for example, the importance of timing of rapport-building within the interview is of great interest. Because the concept of rapport maintenance has received some empirical support in correlational designs ([Walsh & Bull, 2012](#)), future research could experimentally manipulate when rapport has the most impact on investigatory outcomes. It would be highly informative to know whether and when rapport must be established to be effective.

Implications for Legal Policy and Practice

As rapport is considered highly paramount to successful investigative interviewing outcomes and is widely recommended by major interviewing guidelines, this review sheds light on whether these recommendations have empirical merit. The reviewed literature supports the recommendations within the NICHD protocol to build rapport with child witnesses, as rapport exerts a clear and robust benefit to child witness recall, particularly in sexual abuse cases (for a review, see [Hershkowitz, 2009](#)). As a result, it is our opinion that expert testimony on this issue meets the threshold established by federal and state statute and case law for evidentiary admissibility as established by *Frye v. United States* (1923) or *Daubert v. Merrell Dow Pharmaceuticals* (1993) and their progeny. That is, we believe that the results are consistent enough that the general consensus among child witness researchers would be that rapport-building benefits child witness recall. Further, we believe that the research relied on to draw this conclusion is of sufficient scientific rigor for us to be reasonably confident in the benefits of rapport-building with child witnesses.

However, the results are more equivocal when it comes to rapport's effects on adult witness recall. Although three studies have shown that rapport-building benefits adult witness recall (e.g., Collins et al., 2002; Holmberg & Madsen, in press; Vallano & Schreiber Compo, 2011), other studies have failed to replicate these clear benefits and, in fact, have sometimes found an increase in other false information (e.g., Kieckhafer, 2014; Kieckhafer et al., 2014; Villalba et al., 2013). Because of the paucity of research in this area and the fact that these findings mainly originate from only a few laboratories, we believe that these benefits need to be replicated by others and the theoretical underpinnings of the contexts in which rapport may or may not be beneficial more deeply understood before concluding that rapport-building exerts a net benefit on adult witness recall. Thus, we suggest that expert testimony on the benefits of rapport on adult witness recall should be considered premature at this point, particularly until we better understand dispositional and situational factors that mediate and moderate its potential benefits or detriments.

Despite the belief by practitioners and major interviewing guidelines that rapport-building strongly contributes to a successful investigative interview, there is also scant research examining the effects of rapport-building on criminal suspects. To our knowledge, no research has isolated the effects of rapport-building on interrogation outcomes, such as output accuracy, investigative leads, and the diagnosticity of obtained confessions. Instead, we can only indirectly surmise that rapport-building may be one of many potential reasons why an information-gathering or humanitarian interview approach produces more diagnostic information than an accusatorial or dominant interview approach (see Meissner et al., 2012). Further complicating the issue is the fact that both information-gathering and accusatory approaches recommend the use of rapport-building, albeit for different reasons. Despite the argument that rapport-building may be a more humane and diagnostic interviewing technique, leading to the production of higher quality evidence, to date there is no direct empirical evidence supporting this belief. Therefore, we caution against the blanket recommendation of building rapport with all criminal suspects in all situations, particularly because it could have a negative impact on the quality and quantity of information elicited in certain contexts, particularly when used by investigators who take a more accusatorial interview approach.

On a general note, the use of rapport during investigative interviews should be encouraged as a general strategy of humane interviewing that has the potential to increase the public's trust and confidence in law enforcement. Conversely, the failure to build rapport can induce broad skepticism regarding law enforcement investigations and investigators' interactions with interviewees in particular. Therefore, even if decades of research indicate that rapport does not significantly improve the most precious of investigatory outcomes—that is, the quality of information reported by witnesses and the diagnosticity of confession evidence—it stands to reason that building rapport is still representative of the prudent and ethical course of action during interviews with witnesses and suspects. As such, we advocate for law enforcement to take an information-gathering approach to investigations, not because the empirical research supports its general effectiveness but because a byproduct of this general approach is the use of rapport with all criminal interviewees, regardless of their position as a witness or suspect or a child or adult and regardless of their race or gender. That is, building a genuine relationship comprising trust and respect is both the right thing to do and may provide more accurate and useful information.

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