

The effect of the cognitive interview on the recall of witnesses with Asperger Syndrome

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The Cognitive Interview (CI, Geiselman, 1984) is now the most widely accepted form of interviewing structure used by police officers in the UK to interview eyewitnesses. Whilst the CI has been demonstrated by a number of studies to be effective in enhancing recall with different groups including those with learning disabilities (Brown & Geiselman, 1990; Milne *et al.*, 1999), the elderly (McMahon, 2000), and those with cognitive impairments (Wright & Holliday, 2007), no research to date has examined its effectiveness with individuals with autism, or specifically, in individuals with Asperger syndrome (AS). This is surprising given the well-documented restricted patterns of interests and specific memory difficulties exhibited by individuals with AS (e.g. Boucher & Bowler, 2008), which may have repercussions on the accuracy and content of their eyewitness testimony. Individuals with AS are usually characterised by average or above average IQ. Moreover, the qualitative differences and specific impairments in memory in individuals with AS compared to other individuals with intellectual disabilities have highlighted the need for specific investigations in relation to episodic memory, suggestibility, and appropriate interviewing styles for witnesses with AS. We will present some preliminary findings from an ongoing study to examine: a) whether individuals differ from their age and IQ-matched counterparts on accuracy and amount and type of detail recalled for a witnessed event; and b) whether the CI more effective in eliciting more detailed, yet accurate reports than a standard structured interview for witnesses with AS, as is the case for typical individuals.