



People who say they know it all: The influence of interviewers' authority on the suggestibility of over-claimers

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ABSTRACT

Interrogative suggestibility may vary as a function of interviewer's apparent authority. This study examined individual differences in sensitivity to authority figures, focusing on non-clinical narcissism and suggestibility. As narcissists are more inclined to have a "kiss up, kick down" behaviour pattern, their suggestibility may be influenced by interviewer prestige. Narcissism is a consistent predictor of over-claiming; hence the Over-claiming Questionnaire (OCQ) was used as a measure for non-clinical narcissism. Suggestibility of over-claimers ($N = 30$) and under-claimers ($N = 30$) was assessed using the Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale 1 (GSS1). During the administration of the GSS1, the interviewer's apparent authority was manipulated by varying how she presented herself. It was hypothesised that participants who have high OCQ response bias indices (over-claimers) will display more suggestible tendencies, and therefore obtain higher GSS1 scores when faced with interviewers of higher prestige compared to those with low OCQ response bias indices (under-claimers). Results analysed using MANOVA showed that under-claimers generally scored significantly higher in Total Suggestibility. The main effect of interviewer's apparent authority was non-significant. Over-claimers tested in the low interviewer prestige condition gained lower Shift scores than under-claimers. Such results are consistent with the notion that Shift is primarily based on sensitivity to interpersonal pressure. It is also suggested that the varying levels of self-esteem in over-claimers are the basis of their unique ways of responding to suggestions by authority figures.

KEY WORDS:	OVER-CLAIMING	NARCISSISM	INTERROGATIVE SUGGESTIBILITY	INTERVIEWER AUTHORITY	INTERPERSONAL PRESSURE
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Suggestibility is the extent to which a person accepts and incorporates post event information into memory recall (Gudjonsson, 1986). Being susceptible to suggestions is a normal phenomenon as we are all inclined to accept and act on the suggestions given by others to a certain extent. Broadly speaking, a suggestion only has the potential to bring about a response, whether it does or not is determined by the susceptibility of the individual to suggestions, the nature and characteristics of the suggestion, and also the context in which the suggestion takes place (Gudjonsson, 2010). Suggestibility is a psychological vulnerability that is known to be very prevalent during police interviews. 'Interrogative suggestibility' (IS), a term coined by Gudjonsson (1984a), describes the susceptibility to influences present during questioning of witnesses, victims, and suspects in a criminal context which may have a distorting effect on testimony. Ever since there were reports of wrongful convictions due to circumstances such as distorted testimony and induced false confessions, the reliability of eyewitness testimony as well as suspects' statements during police interrogation has been questioned.

In the last few decades, much research has examined the mechanisms and processes involved when people provide erroneous testimony. The Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scales 1 and 2 (GSS1 and GSS2; Gudjonsson, 1984a, 1997) were designed as an instrument to measure IS, more specifically the extent to which a person 'yields' to leading questions, and the degree to which that person 'shifts' elements of the previous answer in response to explicit critical feedback or interpersonal pressure. A theoretical framework explaining suggestibility has been put forward by Gudjonsson and Clark (1986), in which IS has been defined as:

"the extent to which, within a closed social interaction, people come to accept messages communicated during formal questioning as a result of which their subsequent behavioural response is affected".

Based on this model, IS depends on a person's cognitive appraisal of the interrogation. Factors that impact interviewee's cognitive judgement which subsequently affect their level of IS include heightened uncertainty about the subject-matter, expectations regarding what will happen, the use of negative feedback, and the presence of rapport between interviewer and interviewee. The model suggested that high IS scores result from a complex interaction between these cognitive and socially-based factors.

There are two core theoretical approaches to IS, namely individual differences and experimental (Gudjonsson, 1992). It was said that the individual differences approach views IS as being dependent on coping strategies individuals come up with when confronted with uncertainties and expectations in the interrogative context. This view accounts for individual differences in suggestibility behaviour. The experimental approach, on the other hand, emphasises on understanding conditions under which verbal accounts of eyewitnesses can be affected by leading questions (Loftus, 1979). The emphasis here is on situational determinants of IS. According to Schooler and Loftus (1986), these two approaches are complementary, and should not be regarded as being competitive or mutually exclusive.

The aim of the GSS is to assess two primary types of suggestive influence said to underlie IS, namely leading questions and interrogative pressure

(Gudjonsson, 1983), which may compromise the accuracy and dependability of testimony. Each scale comprises a spoken narrative in which participants are asked for their free recall. Twenty questions are then asked, 15 of which are leading, suggesting certain particulars that were not part of the original narrative. The number of the leading items accepted by participants when the questions are asked provides an initial score termed 'Yield 1'. Previous studies have found this score to be associated with cognitive aspects like intelligence and memory (Bain & Baxter, 2000; Gudjonsson, 1983, 1984, 1992). Participants are then told that they have made some errors and it is therefore necessary to re-administer the questions. This negative feedback is stated 'clearly and firmly' as emphasised by Gudjonsson (1997). After the questions are administered for the second time, 'Yield 2', the total number of leading items accepted following negative feedback, is obtained. From these two scores, 'Shift', the number of responses clearly changed from the first response, and 'Total Suggestibility', which is the sum of Yield 1 and Shift, are obtained. It has been put forward that the Shift measure is predominantly based on sensitivity to interpersonal pressure (Baxter, Charles, Martin, & McGroarty, 2012; Schooler & Loftus, 1986; Baxter, Bain, Pringle, Fowler, & Tafili, in press).

The administration of negative feedback is an important aspect of the GSS. In actual police interviews, negative feedback communicated to witnesses, victims, or suspects is usually in the form of disapproval or criticism, either overt or covert. Not only can negative feedback result in change or shift of responses, it can increase a person's susceptibility to subsequent leading questions (Gudjonsson, 1984a, 1984b). Gudjonsson and Clark (1986) proposed that no major effect of suggestibility will be found if an interviewee rejects the negative feedback. However, there are instances where negative feedback can cause resistant interviewees to respond with even more resistance to further suggestions. This is due to suspicions towards the interviewer that arise based on the previous situation. Contrariwise, the acceptance of negative feedback increases uncertainty, making one more suggestible. Accepting negative feedback can also lower the interviewee's self-esteem and temporarily increase the level of anxiety, causing the person to readily attend to external cues instead of relying on his or her own existing internal frame of reference (Gudjonsson, 1992). For some, however, negative feedback is construed as a challenge to improve and so they become more critical of the interview situation and less suggestible.

Some individuals feel obliged to comply and give in to what they perceive is required of them. Compliance happens in an attempt to appease interviewers and prevent confrontation, thus they go along with the interviewer by yielding to given suggestions and amend their answers in the experiment, even if they privately are aware that their answers are incorrect. Baxter and Boon (2000) argued that some interviewees comply because they address situational demands rather than engaging in the memory search process, and hence are unaware of any contradictions between what is said and what the truth is.

While a suggestion refers to properties within a stimulus such as expectations and leading qualities, suggestibility refers to attributes found in the individual who is being incited to respond, hence it is an individual difference variable. Due to individual differences, personality characteristics are among the factors determining an individual's susceptibility to influence by others, suggesting that people with

certain personality characteristics predispose them to be more readily influenced by authority figures (Berkowitz & Lundy, 2006). In fact, Devenport and Fisher (1996) proposed that the legitimate authority of police officers itself has the ability to affect eyewitness suggestibility, intentionally or unintentionally. Decades ago, Milgram's (1964) classic experiment demonstrated that obedience to authority is so potent to the extent that subordinates were reluctant to refuse orders given by authority, even when they were only implied. Some studies also reported that compliance can be easily induced just by the attire or uniform a person is wearing, apart from the position he or she holds (Bickman, 1974; Bushman, 1988). Nevertheless, taking individual differences into consideration, it can be concluded that sensitivity to authority figures varies among people and therefore has an impact on how suggestible they are when being questioned during interviews and interrogations (Haraldsson, 1985).

There are, however, individuals with certain personality types who react differently when faced with authority figures, for instance people with narcissism. As a personality disorder, narcissism is characterised by a long-standing pattern of self-centeredness, an elevated sense of self-importance, lack of empathy, and an overwhelming need for compliments and admiration. Although it is said that some form of narcissism is in fact adaptive and necessary within each individual to maintain a positive self-view, extreme narcissists tend to distort this positive self-view into unreasonably high expectations and aspirations. In other words, their perceived abilities often do not match their actual abilities. In Vaknin's (2001) book, he stated that people diagnosed as narcissists alternately idealise and denigrate figures of authority. There is an idealisation phase in which narcissists strive to emulate their idol, but as the narcissists' are let down by their unrealistic expectations, they start to devalue the figure they once admire. This suggests that narcissists, unlike most people, respond to authority figures in a unique or rather inconsistent pattern.

A recent study conducted by Paulhus, Westlake, Calvez, and Harms (in press) has shown how behaviour, attitude, and even narcissism can influence interview outcomes, showing how difficult it is to conduct an effective interview and how fallible it can be when interviewers make judgements when it comes to recruiting potential applicants. It was found that narcissists performed much better in simulated job interviews compared to non-narcissists, as narcissists had an innate tendency to self-promote by engaging and speaking at length – behaviours that portray self-confidence and expertise even when they were held to account by skilled interviewers. When narcissistic applicants were challenged by interviewers, unlike normal individuals who typically backed off into a tactical modesty when held accountable, they actually boost their attempts to make themselves look better. Even expert interviewers were found to consistently favour those who were narcissistic. There has also been research on non-clinical population which found that the way people with narcissism react to threats to their self-worth is through exaggerating their accomplishments (Raskin, Novacek, & Hogan, 1991a) and by devaluing others (Morf & Rhodewalt, 1993). From these studies, one can imagine the serious legal implications that may arise when such phenomenon occurs in the police interrogation context.

Studies looking into narcissism have come up with mixed results as to whether the positive feelings exhibited by narcissists are genuine or a façade. An

article by Pappas (2011) revealed that in a study conducted by Myers and colleagues, 71 undergraduate women were recruited and asked to complete a questionnaire designed to rate self-esteem and narcissism. The study involved some deception, in which students were tricked into thinking they were submitted to a lie-detector test so that the researchers were able to tell if the students were telling the truth. Some participants were told that the lie-detector test was only for training purposes and that the machine would be turned off prior to the test. For those who scored low in narcissism, being “monitored” by the lie-detecting equipment did not make any difference in their reported self-esteem. However, those who were more narcissistic reported more ‘feel good’ feelings when they were told that the lie detector was off. Furthermore, narcissistic participants admitted to lower self-esteem when they believed that the researchers could tell if they were being truthful. Based on these findings, it was suggested that narcissists may be inflating their self-esteem in order to cover for a deep-seated sense of inferiority. There was also a possibility that they may be trying to influence the way others perceive them. As proposed by Gudjonsson and Clark (1986), self-esteem is linked to the perceived distance between the interviewer and interviewee, and people who have lower self-esteem tend to be more suggestible.

According to Paulhus, Harms, Bruce, and Lysy (2003), narcissism is a consistent predictor of over-claiming, which is defined as the tendency to claim more knowledge than one actually possesses (Paulhus & Bruce, 1990). Over-claimers with narcissistic tendencies typically respect only those they see as authority figures and wish to emulate. As they are more inclined to have a “kiss up, kick down” behaviour pattern, it is likely that factors that impact their status-consciousness may affect their suggestibility. This suggests that over-claimers’ level of IS may vary as a function of interviewer’s apparent authority. In other words, they become more susceptible to suggestions given by those they perceive as authority figures, but ignore suggestions coming from people of low authority. In a study looking into the relationship between interviewer and interviewee, Ceci, Ross, and Toglia (1987) found children to be more susceptible to misleading post-event information given by adults, compared to information given by other children of similar age and status. It was argued that children are often questioned by adults who have higher authority over them and therefore are intimidated by the interviewer’s status, resulting in increased suggestibility. In another study, Paddock and Terranova (2001) examined the effect of perceived authority on the recall of autobiographical memories among undergraduates. The participants first recounted a childhood event, but the details of the account were verbally presented by the experimenter instead of a recollection of their personal experience. Participants then completed an audio visualisation task which was led by either an expert or a non-expert. Those in the expert condition, in which the expert was introduced as a 50-year-old respectable, licenced clinical psychologist specialising in memory recall, recalled more false events. In the non-expert condition, the recalling process was guided by also a 50-year-old man, but he was a mature student who had gone back to school to study communications. Participants assigned to this condition had less recollection of false events through the visualisation task. Such results showed that experimenter’s status in regards to expertise may have an impact on a person’s suggestibility, whereby people were more convinced that information provided by experts is often accurate.

Perception of distance between interviewer and interviewee is known to be related to suggestibility, in which Gudjonsson and MacKeith (1982) postulated that questioners may create some form of pressure that increases susceptibility in interviewees. When participants were placed under conditions with the same interrogative pressure, factors such as perceived lack of confidence and control in coping with the interview were identified as being highly associated to suggestibility (Gudjonsson & Lister, 1984). Other variables include feelings of anxiety and powerlessness. Baxter and Boon (2000) also studied the influence of psychological distance on IS by varying interviewer demeanour. They had the interviewer administer negative feedback in either a 'friendly', 'firm' or 'stern' way. It was reasoned that firm negative feedback maximises psychological distance, allowing the interrogator to have a 'tactical advantage' over the person being questioned. In addition, there was an increase in Yield 2 and Shift scores when interviewer behaviour changed from 'friendly' through to 'stern', although no significant difference in Total Suggestibility scores were found across those conditions. In regard to interviewer status, it was assumed that people of high authority are generally more likely to be rated as being stern and authoritative, which causes psychological distance to increase, therefore interviewees are expected to be more inclined to change their responses when given negative feedback.

Findings from these previous studies show that suggestibility is a complex process, and that there are more general issues associated with it. IS appears to be a function of both situational and individual factors. Interviewing styles, experimenter status, authority effect, and individual differences in personality are some of the factors that can vary suggestibility scores. In the present study, the researchers are particularly interested in the contribution of personality factors like non-clinical narcissism and the influence of interviewer's authority on suggestibility. Since people with higher narcissism constantly seek approval and recognition, it is hypothesised on the basis of the abovementioned arguments that those who over-claim will display more suggestible tendencies when faced with interviewers who have authority over them. Over-claimers are expected to be more suggestible to individuals of higher prestige compared to under-claimers. They will also be less suggestible to people of lower authority compared to under-claimers. It is noted that such difference is relative; the data are merely comparisons of scores collected from a non-clinical sample.

Method

Design

The study was a two-factor between-groups design. The response bias index was an independent measure with two levels, where participants were either from the over-claiming group or the under-claiming group. The other factor, the interviewer's apparent authority, was also an independent measure with two levels, whereby the same interviewer was either a person of high prestige or low prestige. The dependent variables were the scores of the four principal measures of GSS1, including Yield 1, Yield 2, Shift, and Total Suggestibility which use a ratio scale of measurement.

Participants

All participants were university students, undergraduates and postgraduates ($M = 20.53$ years, $SD = 2.24$, range 18-28). Forty-one females and 19 males were

involved in the entire study. The same 23-year-old female experimenter conducted the entire study.

Procedure

This study involved two phases. In phase 1, 70 participants completed the Over-Claiming Questionnaire (OCQ-150; Paulhus & Bruce, 1990) that measures over-claiming in participants. Respondents were asked to rate their familiarity with 150 general knowledge items divided into 10 domains (see Appendix for sample questionnaire). Within each category, there were 12 existent and 3 nonexistent items (“foils”). Participants were to rate each item on a 7-point rating scale ranging from 0 (*never heard of it*) to 6 (*very familiar with it*). Any degree of claimed knowledge about the 30 foil items constitutes over-claiming, operationalised with the ‘Response Bias’ index.

During recruitment, participants were told that the researcher was a visiting lecturer conducting a research on memory recall. After ranking them according to their response bias indices from the highest to the lowest scores, the top 30 participants were categorised as over-claimers whereas the bottom 30 participants were known as under-claimers. These 60 participants were invited via e-mail to participate in phase 2 of the study.

In phase 2, the participants in the over-claiming group were randomly assigned into two groups. Half of the sample underwent a condition in which the experimenter’s authority was boosted, where she dressed up in formal attire and claimed to be a visiting lecturer with doctoral qualification. This was to prime over-claimers with a deception that targets their status-consciousness. The other half of the sample underwent a condition where the same experimenter was a casually-dressed fellow student. The participants in the over-claiming group was administered the Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale 1 (GSS1), as well as a 5-point Likert scale ratings on 18 aspects of the interviewer’s manner which include nervous, severe, friendly, understanding, assertive, confident, professional, firm, respectful, positive, formal, warm, stern, organized, effective, authoritative, competent, and negative. This ‘Interviewer Attitude Questionnaire’ was based on the interviewer manner rating form by Bain and Baxter (2000). The under-claiming group underwent the same procedure.

All participants were thoroughly debriefed upon completion of data collection. Those tested under the high interviewer prestige condition were informed that the deception was necessary for the study.

Scoring the OCQ

There are several statistical techniques for scoring the ‘Response Bias’ index (see Macmillan & Creelman, 1991 for more complex scoring procedures). The present study used the following formula:

- (i) *Hits*. This is the number of existent items that were given a rating higher than ‘0’. The range of possible scores is 0 to 120. The proportion of hits is calculated.

- (ii) *False Alarms.* This measures the number of foils that were given a rating higher than '0'. Possible scores range from 0 to 30. The proportion of false alarms is calculated.
- (iii) *Response Bias.* Response bias is the sum of proportion of hits and proportion of false alarms.

Scoring the GSS1

Scoring was in accordance to the Gudjonsson's (1997) guidelines:

- (i) *Memory recall.* The scoring of immediate recall and confabulation are not included when scoring suggestibility.
 - (a) *Immediate memory recall.* This is recorded immediately after the narrative is presented. Every distinct idea presented correctly by the interviewee earns one point. The maximum possible score is 40.
 - (b) *Confabulation.* Confabulation is a false memory that occurs unintentionally; in which gaps in memory are replaced with imaginary recall believed to be real. Every piece of information presented by the interviewee that is not found in the original narrative, as well as any major distortions in the content scores one point.
- (ii) *Interrogative suggestibility.* There are four principal measures.
 - (a) *Yield 1.* Suggestive questions are either leading or have an affirmative response bias, or in the case of false alternative questions there is a suggestive effect that one alternative is correct. Each leading question that is "yielded to" scores one point. The range of scores is 0 to 15.
 - (b) *Yield 2.* This measure is identical to Yield 1, scored after negative feedback is administered.
 - (c) *Shift.* This score measures the number of times a distinct change in response is found, with the possible range of scores being 0 to 15.
 - (d) *Total suggestibility.* This is the combined scores of Yield 1 and Shift. The possible range of scores is 0 to 35.

Results

A one-way ANOVA conducted on participants' ratings of interviewer behaviour showed significant differences between the high interviewer authority condition and low interviewer authority condition, $F(1,58) = 15.97.$, $p = .001$. Ratings for organised, effective, and competent were excluded from the analysis as these adjectives seemed to be able to describe interviewer behaviour in both conditions. No significant differences in immediate Memory Recall, $F(1,58) = .02$, $p = .88$, and Confabulation, $F(1,58) = .71.$, $p = .40$, were observed between both conditions, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Mean and standard deviation scores of memory recall and confabulation for both conditions

	High Interviewer Authority		Low Interviewer Authority		Total	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Memory Recall	20.05	4.32	20.22	4.44	20.13	4.34
Confabulation	1.93	1.34	2.20	1.10	2.07	1.22

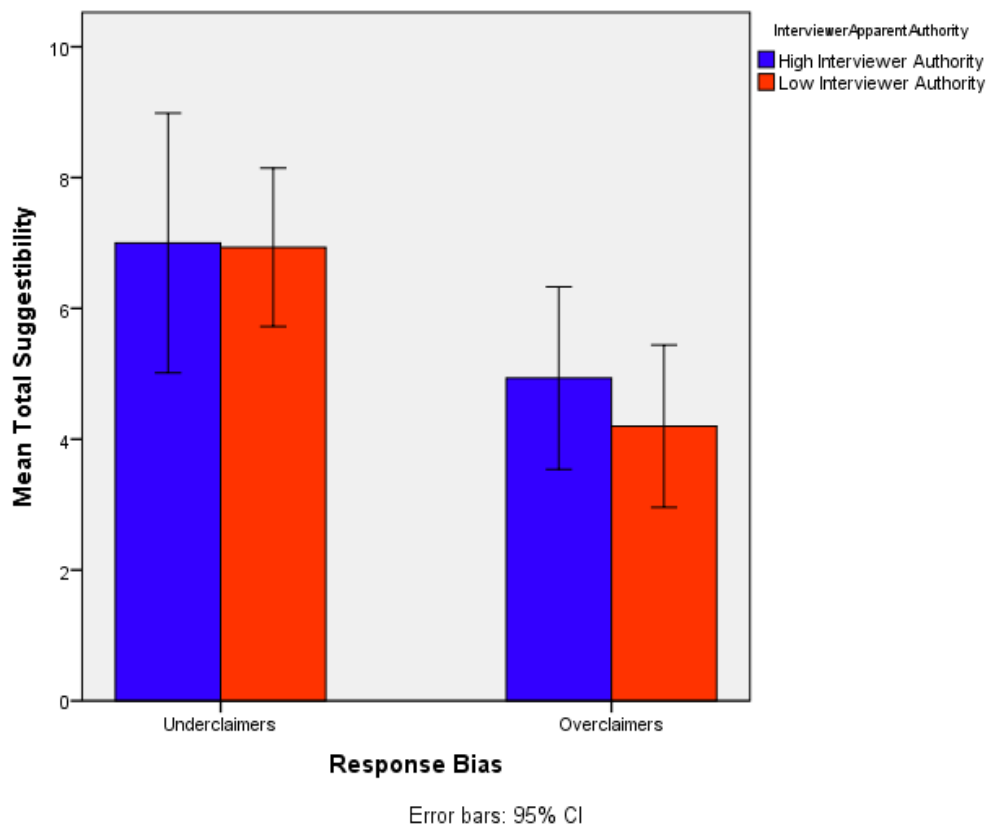


Figure 1: Bar chart illustrating the effects of interviewer apparent authority and response bias on total suggestibility scores

Table 2
Mean and standard deviation scores of GSS1 for response bias and interviewer apparent authority

		High Interviewer Authority	Low Interviewer Authority	Total
Total Suggestibility	Under-claimers	7.00 (3.59)	6.93 (2.19)	6.97 (2.92)
	Over-claimers	4.93 (2.52)	4.20 (2.42)	4.57 (2.37)
	Total	5.97 (3.22)	5.57 (2.58)	
Yield 1	Under-claimers	4.33 (2.02)	3.80 (1.27)	4.07 (1.68)
	Over-claimers	2.73 (1.49)	2.80 (1.74)	2.77 (1.59)
	Total	3.53 (1.93)	3.30 (1.58)	
Yield 2	Under-claimers	5.60 (3.00)	5.53 (1.69)	5.57 (2.39)
	Over-claimers	4.27 (2.28)	3.40 (1.88)	3.83 (2.10)
	Total	4.93 (2.70)	4.47 (2.06)	
Shift	Under-claimers	2.67 (1.88)	3.13 (1.85)	2.90 (1.85)
	Over-claimers	2.20 (1.74)	1.40 (0.91)	1.80 (1.42)
	Total	2.43 (1.79)	2.27 (1.68)	

According to Table 2, under-claimers had higher Total Suggestibility scores compared to over-claimers. When faced with an interviewer of higher apparent authority, participants generally scored slightly higher on Total Suggestibility compared to those interviewed by a person of lower apparent authority, although the mean scores did not vary much between both conditions. Suggestibility scores were found to be the lowest in conditions where over-claimers were interviewed by an interviewer of lower apparent authority. The effects of over-claiming and interviewer authority on Total Suggestibility are illustrated in Figure 1.

A MANOVA showed a significant main effect of response bias index on all GSS1 scores, as follows: Total Suggestibility [$F(1,56) = 11.91, p = .001, \eta^2_p = .18$]; Yield 1 [$F(1,56) = 9.27, p = .004, \eta^2_p = .14$]; Yield 2 [$F(1,56) = 8.77, p = .004, \eta^2_p = .14$]; and Shift [$F(1,56) = 6.73, p = .012, \eta^2_p = .11$]. Participants with lower response bias index scored significantly higher on all GSS1 scores compared to those with higher response bias index. When compared to the high interviewer prestige condition, under-claimers demonstrated a higher Shift scores ($M = 3.13, SD = 1.85$) when the interviewer was of low prestige but contrastingly, the over-claimers showed lower Shift scores ($M = 1.40, SD = 0.91$). The descriptive statistics of GSS1 scores are detailed in Table 2.

The main effect of interviewer's apparent authority was non-significant, $F(1,56) = .33, p = .57, \eta^2_p = .006$. There was no significant interaction between

response bias and interviewer's apparent authority on Total Suggestibility scores, $F(1,56) = .23$, $p = .63$, $\eta^2_p = .004$. Overall, under-claimers who are faced with an interviewer with higher apparent authority scored higher in Total Suggestibility but over-claimers interviewed by a person of lower apparent authority had lower Total Suggestibility scores.

Discussion

For the present study, if the experimenter subsumes the role of an interviewer of high prestige, she should expect to obtain higher ratings on aspects like severe, assertive, firm, formal, stern, authoritative, negative, professional, and confident. In contrast, behaviour manner such as nervous, friendly, understanding, respectful, positive, and warm should be adopted by the interviewer when in the low authority condition. Based on participants' ratings of interviewer's manner, it can be broadly confirmed that the experimenter's attempt to vary interviewer behaviour succeeded. There was no variability among Memory Recall and Confabulation scores as a function of experimental manipulation, ruling out differences in overall memory recall for the GSS1 narrative.

Studies done by McGroarty and Baxter (2007, 2009) have illustrated several interacting determinants of IS identified in Gudjonsson and Clark's (1986) model. The 'Shift' in the GSS is a response change measure that indicates acceptance of negative feedback, but it has been put forward that changes are as a result of mechanisms that operate relatively independently (Gudjonsson, 1984, 1991, 2003). Shift scores obtained from the current study seemed to confirm the argument that Shift is sensitive to socially-based factors such as interpersonal trust and pressure, whereas Yield 1 is dependent on cognitive factors like memory and attention. Generally speaking, social and cognitive factors impact 'Shift' measures to varying degrees. For instance, participants who avoid recall of the initial stimulus (narrative from the GSS) may affect their tendency to modify their responses following negative feedback. Alternatively, interviewees may attend more to the management of the interpersonal situation and attempt to meet the perceived demands of the interviewer (Bain & Baxter, 2000; Baxter & Boon, 2000). An overlap between these social and cognitive processes can be found in interview situations where interviewers have high authority. There will be a greater likelihood that participants will accept inaccurate information communicated to them if they take on an avoidance coping strategy, relying on environmental cues instead of their own memory (Gudjonsson, 1991). This tendency works together with elements such as uncertainty about the right answer or trust in the questioner's honest intentions, furthermore any form of questioning makes the interviewee think that an answer is expected of him or her. It is valid to argue that there is a more pressuring effect particularly when the questioner is perceived to have power and authority over the interviewee. Gudjonsson (1988) reasoned that interviewees are inclined to alter their answers following negative feedback because the feedback makes them feel more anxious. As they become distracted by the anxiety, they become more uncertain and will subsequently change responses (McGroarty & Baxter, 2007).

The complex dynamic between these factors, together with personality factors affect one's cognitive appraisal of such factors and therefore impact the IS. Under-claimers scored higher than over-claimers on all four of the GSS principal measures, which is an indicator of high levels of IS. Woolston, Bain, and Baxter (2006) in their

research on the malingering effects on GSS measures reported that those who are motivated to comply with the interviewer were the ones with elevated scores on the four principal GSS scores. Nonetheless it was also noted that ideally there is a distinction between suggestibility and compliance, in which suggestibility denotes explicit and implicit acceptance of information, whereas compliance occurs when one overtly accepts information which is covertly rejected. Even so, the distinction between suggestibility and compliance is often muddled due to the many factors contributing to the highly interactive process of IS. Gudjonsson (2003) noted that there are some overlapping between constructs of suggestibility and compliance. Gudjonsson and Sigurdsson (2004) used the Other and Self-Deception Questionnaires (ODQ and SDQ; Sackeim & Gur, 1978, 1979) among prisoners and did not find either of these measures to significantly correlated with suggestibility and compliance as measured by the GSS1 and the Gudjonsson Compliance Scale (GCS). It was concluded that self-favouring bias had no major influence on GSS1 and GCS scores, and undoubtedly having a strong self-favouring bias is common to narcissists. Naturally over-claimers who consistently favour themselves will be less likely to comply and give in to leading questions and negative feedback, as results from the present study have shown.

Despite the absence of a significant main effect of the interviewer's apparent authority, there was a pattern found in Shift scores indicating that over-claimers were less likely to change their responses in the low prestige condition. Morf and Rhodewalt (1993) argued that narcissists typically engage in self-evaluation maintenance, hence to reduce threats to their supremacy they tend to be exploitative of others. Narcissists try to maintain feelings of superiority, thus when given negative feedback, an increased resistance towards the interviewer develops and they become less convinced by what they have been told, especially when they perceive the interviewer as being inferior to them. Studies have consistently shown self-esteem and narcissism to be positively correlated, and that narcissists think they are better than others (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002). Moreover individuals whose levels of self-esteem are high are more resistant to interrogative pressure (Gudjonsson & Lister, 1984).

Academic staffs are commonly viewed as professionals with expertise, and they normally possess qualities such as confidence and professionalism. At large most individuals tend to perceive themselves as being psychologically distant from a professional in terms of skills and abilities and hence are intimidated by the experts' status. According to Bain and Baxter's (2000) study, the interviewer who adopted an 'abrupt' manner throughout the administration of the GSS1 resulted in elevated Shift and Total Suggestibility scores among interviewees compared to the condition in which the same interviewer adopted a 'friendly' manner, suggesting that certain interrogation techniques may increase psychological distance. The greater psychological distance between the questioner and the interviewee with high self-esteem may lower scores on the Shift and Total Suggestibility measures. Another possible explanation to justify over-claimers' reduced suggestibility is that individuals who have high self-esteem are more likely to experience suspiciousness and therefore are more critical when being provided with negative feedback (Gudjonsson, 1992). The lower Total Suggestibility and Shift scores obtained by over-claimers in the high prestige condition is an indicator of this. At the same time, it suggests that

the role of the visiting lecturer seemed to have the effect of maximising psychological distance among people with high self-esteem.

In contrast, those who are low in self-esteem are particularly sensitive to interpersonal pressure because of the increased uncertainty and anxiousness when confronted by someone who is perceived as superior to them, especially when they are unfamiliar with procedures in the interrogative context (Singh & Gudjonsson, 1984). Baxter, Jackson, and Bain (2003), in their attempt to account for individual differences in terms of interviewees' reaction to different questioning styles, examined the notion that individuals who are high in anxiety levels and have the perception that they lack competence control and power in the context of interrogation appear to be more suggestible. Interviewees vulnerable to social pressure due to a lack of self-esteem tend to gain higher scores on Yield 2, Shift, and Total Suggestibility, regardless of how the interviewer behaves. Their results were consistent with Gudjonsson and Lister's (1984) argument that through the manipulation of a person's level of self-esteem and perception of power and control, it is possible to make people particularly susceptible to suggestions. Under-claimers' scores on these three measures confirmed this point as well. Again, though insignificant, the results in this study did show that under-claimers scored marginally lower on suggestibility in the low prestige condition. Nonetheless, under-claimers' Shift scores were higher when the interviewer was of low authority. This is possibly due to the reduced psychological distance between people of similar status, and hence their self-esteem is less likely to be threatened. Consequently, under-claimers were more likely to identify with the interviewer, resulting in more suggestible and compliant tendencies. Results from Berkowitz and Lundy's (1957) study indicated that individuals whose opinions tend to be successfully influenced by peer groups are those who score low on the interpersonal confidence measure. This is because those low in self-esteem and self-confidence tend to utilise peers as reference group in the formation and the maintenance of attitudes. Based on these results, they also hypothesised that a combination of high authoritarianism and high interpersonal confidence results in some indifference or even resentment towards peers, but a comparatively high regard for authority figures – a behaviour pattern commonly found among narcissists. Results of the present study also indicated that over-claimers were slightly more suggestible in the high interviewer prestige condition. Suppose that the prestige effect was more convincing, there is a high possibility that the Total Suggestibility scores of the over-claimers in the current study would have shown a more obvious "kiss up, kick down" behaviour pattern.

The roles of authority figures are being defined by society as having legitimate social power. Evidence from variations of obedience experiments has shown that people obey and comply with commands from an authority when they assume that the authority is a competent expert (Blass, 1999). Compliance to orders by authority figures in real-life settings is common, for example nurses obey clinicians (Hofling, Brotzman, Dalrymple, Graves, & Pierce, 1966), students obey teachers, but generally everyone obeys police officers (Bickman, 1974). In the context of police interrogations, it can then be assumed that suggestibility will increase at large as people are more intimidated by police status. It is possible that the status of an academic staff itself is not sufficient to have an effect on over-claimers' suggestibility, but in the context of a more severe situation such as police interrogations, their levels of IS may vary. Besides, it is also plausible to say that participants were

complying to simply appease the interviewer because she is a “lecturer”, knowing that they have been correct in the first place. Bearing in mind that suggestibility, compliance, and obedience are rather distinct but related constructs, authority figures have strong influence on behaviours of people on the receiving end, with suggestible behaviour being one of them. These points re-emphasise that the interaction between cognitive and interpersonal mechanisms is what varies a person’s degree of IS.

A common notion that is widely accepted is that narcissists are in actual fact very certain about their grandiose claims to superiority and excellence (Robins & John, 1997b). However, it is believed that such behaviour is compensatory, and the positive attitude narcissists adopt towards themselves is said to mask non-conscious, underlying feelings of inferiority (Bosson, Lakey, Campbell, Zeigler-Hill, Jordan, & Kernis, 2008). Data from a study by Rhodewalt, Madrian, and Cheney (1997) found strong links between narcissism and instability of self-esteem. There is little doubt that self-esteem plays a vital role in the process of IS, besides, based on the inconsistent findings that have emerged from numerous studies investigating links between narcissism and self-esteem, it is actually challenging to predict the extent to which narcissists give in to suggestions by authority figures. The study by Paulhus and colleagues (in press) has also proven that narcissists are extremely capable in performing well during job interviews as what gets them to win is the delivery, and even experts find it hard to remain unbiased when recruiting job applicants. From here, it is clearly shown that both individual and interpersonal factors influence interview success, and therefore it can be concluded that suggestibility scores can be affected by personality and interviewer effect.

Gudjonsson (2003a, 2003b, 2010) acknowledged that police interrogations involve a dynamic process which is highly complex, where interaction occurs between several factors including context and individual vulnerability. One aspect of this process that is not widely discussed in the IS literature is psychological vulnerabilities, which is defined as “psychological characteristics or mental states which render a witness prone, in certain circumstances, to providing information which is inaccurate, unreliable or misleading” (Gudjonsson, 2006, p. 68). This aspect must not be neglected as it often place interviewees at a disadvantage due to their limited abilities to cope with the demand characteristics of the interrogative situation (Gudjonsson, 2010). The four common types of psychological vulnerability relevant to the assessment of interviewees in criminal contexts were put forward by Gudjonsson (2006): ‘mental disorders’ such as mental illnesses, personality disorders, and learning disabilities; ‘abnormal mental states’ which comprises anxiety, mood disturbances, bereavement, intoxication, phobias, as well as drug and alcohol withdrawal; ‘intellectual functioning’ that looks into IQ scores; and ‘personality traits’ in which individuals vary in suggestibility, compliance, and acquiescence. Gudjonsson and Young (2011) recently investigated the relationship between the three ‘personality traits’ measures and socially desirable responding. People who engage in socially desirable responding present themselves in an excessively positive and exaggerated fashion, often for the purpose of giving a favourable impression to the public.

Paulhus (2006) proposed that there are two types of socially desirable responding: impression management (IM) and self-deception enhancement (SDE).

While IM is known to be more conscious and intentional, SDE is associated with high self-esteem, overconfidence, narcissism, and unconscious motivated distortion (Hoorens, 1995; Paulhus, 1988, 1998b). This means that narcissists are unlikely to display desirable responding for the purpose of social conventionality (Paulhus, 1998b). There has always been a debate as to whether narcissists have insights into the negative aspects of their personality. On one hand some researchers conclude that narcissists lack insight into their own condition (Emmons, 1984), but on the other it is argued that narcissists are aware of the characteristics they possess. Carlson, Vazire, and Oltmanns (2011) summarised that there are two competing about narcissists' self-insight, namely 'narcissistic ignorance' and 'narcissistic awareness'. The narcissistic awareness view predicts that narcissists recognise that others view them differently from how they view themselves. This prediction was based on evidence that have shown that narcissists are sensitive to negative feedback and are inclined to criticise such feedback (Horton & Sedikides, 2009; Kernis & Sun, 1994; Zeigler-Hill, Myers, & Clark, 2010). Robins & Beer (2001) also found results that support the idea that narcissists are able to acknowledge that other people do not see their performance as positively as they themselves do.

The implications of such findings provide important insights to the police interview process. Given that narcissistic personality disorder is categorised as a psychological vulnerability, and that narcissists behave the way they do because of the absence of self-insight, not only do such circumstances put them at a disadvantage, the reliability of the interview outcome becomes questionable. The lack of a positive correlation between narcissism and IM is an indicator that the grandiose sense of self-worth is beyond conscious awareness. Similarly, if the notion of narcissistic awareness is proven to be true, there should be interrogation techniques which are able to tackle such problems. Looking at the broader picture, interventions can also be developed to help narcissists manage their symptoms.

In conclusion, there are many factors involved that interact with each other and it is not sufficient to merely look into over-claiming indices and IS. Much of the analysis of results has been simplified in this paper. These results confirm that interviewees with particular personality characteristics will have cognitive sets that predispose them to yield to interpersonal pressure when being interrogated (Gudjonsson, 2003). It is also noted that the Gudjonsson and Clark (1986) model does not make the assumption that the acceptance of negative feedback will inevitably lead to an increased suggestible cognitive set, although very often this occurs. The current study has provided an overview on how narcissism is known to be associated with unstable high self-esteem (Kernis, Grannemann, & Barclay, 1989), and self-esteem seems to be a key factor when suggestibility is concerned, therefore more research has to be carried out to find out if narcissists show a consistent pattern in IS. Even though the experimenter attempted to boost her authority through attire and made-up academic qualifications, it should not be neglected that there are specific factors that influence the perceived status of the interviewer, such as age, gender, ethnicity, intellectual ability, and even physical appearance. Not only are some people more prone to giving in to leading suggestions given by police officers, police officers are also more likely to elicit inaccurate statements under certain conditions of interrogation, depending on how the interrogators present themselves to be. Ultimately, the purpose behind IS research is to identify and protect vulnerable individuals from manipulative tactics

and interrogative pressure. These are issues to bear in mind when conducting interrogations, or any form of interview for that matter.

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