

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for your participation in this research on the effect of proximity and interview techniques on eyewitness memory. Two types of questions were used in this experiment. One was the cognitive interview and the other was a control interview similar to police questions. The cognitive interview uses four retrieval techniques to bring out the memory of an event. These techniques allow a person to express how they felt at the time of the event, recall the event in different orders, mentally change their perspective about the event, and finally report all information they remember—even if it seems unimportant (Geiselman et al., 1984). It was hypothesized that when testing eyewitness memory, the cognitive interview would elicit more accurate responses when compared to the control interview. It was also hypothesized that even if the participant was farther away from the event, they would still report more accurate information with the cognitive interview. If you would like to learn more about the cognitive interview, please see Geiselman et al. (1984).

It was required for the experimenter to deceive you about the event—that is the person did not actually win a prize—because it more closely approximates an event in which an eyewitness would be necessary. Eyewitnesses often do not know they are hearing and seeing events that others will want them to remember. When we are trying to remember something, we often act differently. See Myers (1998) for a discussion of memory.

Your participation was important in helping researchers learn whether the cognitive interview is better for obtaining more accurate information in eyewitness situations. The findings in this study should help to improve the accuracy of eyewitness interview techniques. Improved eyewitness interviewing techniques may aid in solving future crimes in which an eyewitness is present. Also, by participating in this study you have firsthand knowledge of what it is like to be in a psychology experiment.

Final results will be posted on the bulletin board outside of Stewart Hall 213 by the week of December 11. All results are grouped together; therefore, individual results are not available. Your participation will remain confidential. If you have any additional questions regarding this research, please contact Jessica Seaton (scsugal@aol.com) or Dr. Leslie Valdes (valdes@stcloudstate.edu or 255-3092).

References

Geiselman, R.E., Fisher, R.P., Firstenberg, I., Hutton, L.A., Sullivan, S.J., Avetissian, I.V., & Prosk, A.L. (1984). Enhancement of eyewitness memory: An empirical evaluation of the cognitive interview. *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, 12, 74-80.

Myers, D. (1998). *Psychology (5th ed)*. New York: Worth.