

# How to **Defend Yourself** during a **Police Interrogation**



This book is the fruit of many  
complicities: proofreading,  
correcting, discussing and critiquing,  
encouraging, illustrating, formatting,  
translating, printing and distributing.  
Heartfelt thanks to everyone who  
made this project possible.

A PDF version in several languages  
is available for free at  
[Projet-Evasions.org](http://Projet-Evasions.org). We are  
still looking for a publisher who  
wanna print and diffuse the  
book in a paper-version.

1st publication french and  
german : june 2022  
english translation : September 2024

# How to Defend Yourself During a Police Interrogation



A book by Projet Évasions

# Table of content

Foreword to the English version 9

Introduction 11

Before the interrogation 17

<b>1. The context surrounding an interrogation</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2. The criminal justice system</b>	<b>20</b>
<u>Presumption of innocence</u>	<u>23</u>
<i>Parallel construction</i>	25
<b>3. The investigation</b>	<b>27</b>
<u>The case file (investigation file)</u>	<u>28</u>
Proof and evidence	29
<u>The role of the interrogation in the investigation</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>Confession</u>	<u>31</u>

During the interrogation 35

<b>4. Preparation</b>	<b>36</b>
Profiling	36
<u>Information classification</u>	<u>37</u>
<u>Anticipating defense strategies</u>	<u>38</u>
<b>5. General manipulation techniques</b>	<b>39</b>
Provoking sympathy	40
<u>The principle of reciprocity</u>	<u>40</u>
Listening with eyes averted	41
Giving a wrong answer to learn the right one	41
<u>Creating suspicion</u>	<u>42</u>
Denigrating and disparaging	44
<u>Exploiting beliefs and weaknesses</u>	<u>45</u>

The recency effect	47
Spearfishing	48
Creating hope and disappointment	48
The door-in-the-face technique	50
Priming and sham negotiating	50
Avoidance bait	51
<b>6. Interrogation strategies</b>	<b>53</b>
Good cop, bad cop	53
Quicksand	55
Funnel strategy and creating a sense of commitment	57
Unconscious acceptance	59
Humanizing the relationship and the life preserver tactic	60
<i>Stockholm Syndrome</i>	62
Emotional contagion	63
Naïve cops	64
Synchronized interviews	66
Pointing out changes in behavior	68
Minimizing and maximizing	69
Blaming someone else	72
Encouraging confession	73
Flattery and mockery	74
Speculating about the investigation's resources	75
<b>7. Types of questions</b>	<b>77</b>
Open-ended questions	77
Closed-ended questions	78
Speculative questions	78
Test questions	79
Insinuating questions	79
Projection questions	80
Rebound questions	80
Mirroring questions	81

**Around the interrogation** **85**

<b>8. The interrogation report</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>9. Nonverbal communication</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>10. Interpreters</b>	<b>88</b>
<b>11. Lawyers</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>12. Witness hearings</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>13. Police custody and pre-trial detention</b>	<b>93</b>
<i>My cell?</i>	<i>97</i>
<b>14. A few words on violence</b>	<b>98</b>

**Defending yourself** **103**

<b>15. The trap of lying</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>16. Erroneous beliefs that lead to collaboration</b>	<b>106</b>
<u>I have to answer questions from the police.</u>	<u>106</u>
If I don't talk, I'll look suspicious.	110
<u>Rather than silence, it's lying that will get me out of trouble.</u>	<u>110</u>
<u>I did nothing wrong.</u>	<u>111</u>
The cops will stop putting pressure on me if I say something.	111
<b>17. Protecting yourself through silence</b>	<b>112</b>
A bit of history	113
<u>Police counter-technique</u>	<u>114</u>
<i>The exception that confirms the rule</i>	<i>116</i>
<b>18. Mental defense</b>	<b>118</b>
Reducing sources of stress	118
<u>Distancing yourself from the police</u>	<u>121</u>
Retaining decision-making power	123
Letting go	124
<b>19. Imagination and the image of a hero</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>20. Taking care of yourself and others</b>	<b>128</b>
Talking circle	129
<u>Writing letters to prisoners</u>	<u>129</u>
<b>21. What about when things go wrong?</b>	<b>131</b>

Going beyond the police, going beyond the criminal justice system	135
22. Transformative justice	138
23. A long-term effort	140
<i>The parable of the five students</i>	143
Call for translation and dissemination	144
Lexicon	145
Ressources	147

---

***An interrogation is not a peaceful, egalitarian conversation between two individuals. It's a conflict.***

---



# Preface to the English version

In summer 2022, 2000 copies of this book were printed in French and 2000 in German. The french version is now sold out, and the Publisher «Éditions du Commun» will soon reissued the book.

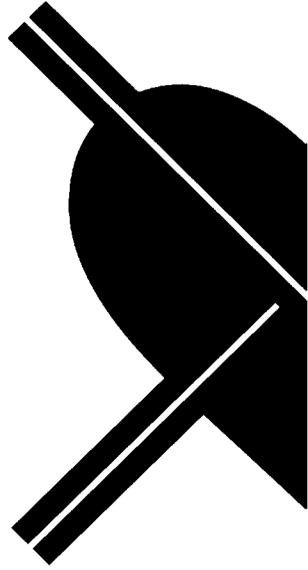
The book was written with the intention of serving as a tool of self-defense against the manipulative interrogation strategies employed by the police. As stated in the introduction, "It addresses readers in various countries in which legislation may differ". And indeed, we soon received feedback that the content conveyed by the book is equally applicable to countries such as Turkey, Morocco, Serbia, Italy, Denmark, and many more. And soon a number of supportive people were offering to translate the book into other languages. This is what happened with the English version, and we'd like to take this opportunity to warmly thank our translator and proofreader for their fine work.

As a consequence of imperialism and colonization, English is spoken today in contexts as diverse as Kenya, Australia and, of course UK and the USA. So many different places from which you may be reading these words, and where the contexts of repression are very different. Most of what is conveyed in the book applies to all these contexts, but, in case of doubts, it makes sense to keep an eye out for certain elements that differ and check them with your local legal team.

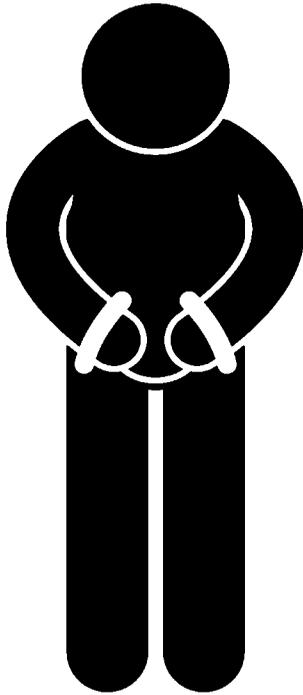
Our network lacks relays in the English-speaking world, so let us take this opportunity to pass on the message that we are looking for a publishing house or collective that would be interested in distributing the book in its geographical regions.

With these words, we wish you a pleasant reading.

*Project-evasions - network of anarchist friendships*



# Introduction



## *Our ignorance is their strength.*



This phrase sums up exactly what a police **interrogation** is based on: our ignorance. Ignorance about the purpose of the police's work, ignorance about the manipulation techniques used, ignorance of the legal framework and ignorance of our own means of defense. An interrogation is not a harmonious conversation between two individuals on equal footing. It's a conflict. An interrogation is unlike a physical conflict, where one person uses their own strength to attack the other. Here, the police exploits your weaknesses, turns them against you and attacks you with them. The information that the person yields allows the police and the criminal justice system to harm them, by fine-tuning their strategies and manipulations for future interrogations or by extracting proof and evidence in court. This brings us to a critical point for self-defense: in order to achieve their goals, the police need the participation of the interrogated person. Over time, I've noticed some things: most people who give information to the police that enables them to do their work don't consider themselves to be snitches. In fact, they don't think they've said anything important. They think they just talked about themselves, that they did nothing wrong and maybe that they even managed to fool the police by lying. This is why we created this book: the best defense during a police interrogation is to refuse to participate and to remain silent.

I'll repeat this again and again in the pages that follow, but it's a statement that bears repeating. The police have a whole arsenal of manipulation strategies and techniques to exploit your weaknesses, including holding you in custody or detaining you

to wear you out and bring your guard down. What's more, popular culture teaches us that we MUST respond when a police officer, an authority figure, asks us questions.

---

***In order to achieve their goals during an interrogation, the police need the participation of the interrogated person.***

---

***A preemptive warning***

*This book is not meant to be a legal guide.*

It addresses readers in various countries in which legislation may differ. However, these legal differences matter little for this content and do not influence our position in any way. The interrogation mechanisms and strategies developed by different police forces have standardized over the years and through communication between forces and countries. Today, police officers worldwide debate and refine their methods of manipulation during police congresses and colloquia and in specialized publications. However, the strategies and practices analyzed and presented in the following pages were mainly developed by police officers working in Western countries. This book therefore reflects a version of reality more typical of Western capitalist democracies.

## ***A second warning***

*This book describes general practices rather than the exact sequence of events you will face in a police confrontation.*

This book demonstrates what the police learns and how they develop their interrogation strategy. What police officers learn is not exactly when they put into practice. Nevertheless, in general, it should be very similar to what is described here.

## ***The content of this book is from several sources***

- 🔥 Police and forensic literature, particularly from police academy training documents, specialized publications and books written for the greater public by police officers.
- 🔥 Analysis of case studies of repression, ongoing investigations and declassified operations.
- 🔥 My personal experience as well as that of my comrades based on the interrogations that we have undergone.

## ***About the language used***

The fact that the police force remains a deeply virilistic institution (with its hallmarks of punishment, constraint, control and surveillance), and that it defends a patriarchal system, does not prevent most police units from recruiting women. Therefore, to avoid reproducing masculine domination over other gender identities, I've written this text with non-gendered language in French, and it has been rendered the same way in this English translation. Not only does the French language place the masculine above the feminine, it imposes a violent binary on the world: nothing exists outside of the male and female genders. In my view, the possibilities for our identities are much more vast, even though I haven't yet found an entirely satisfactory way of putting that in writing.

At the end of this work there is a lexicon of technical terms. They are underlined where they first appear in the text.

### ***About the police***

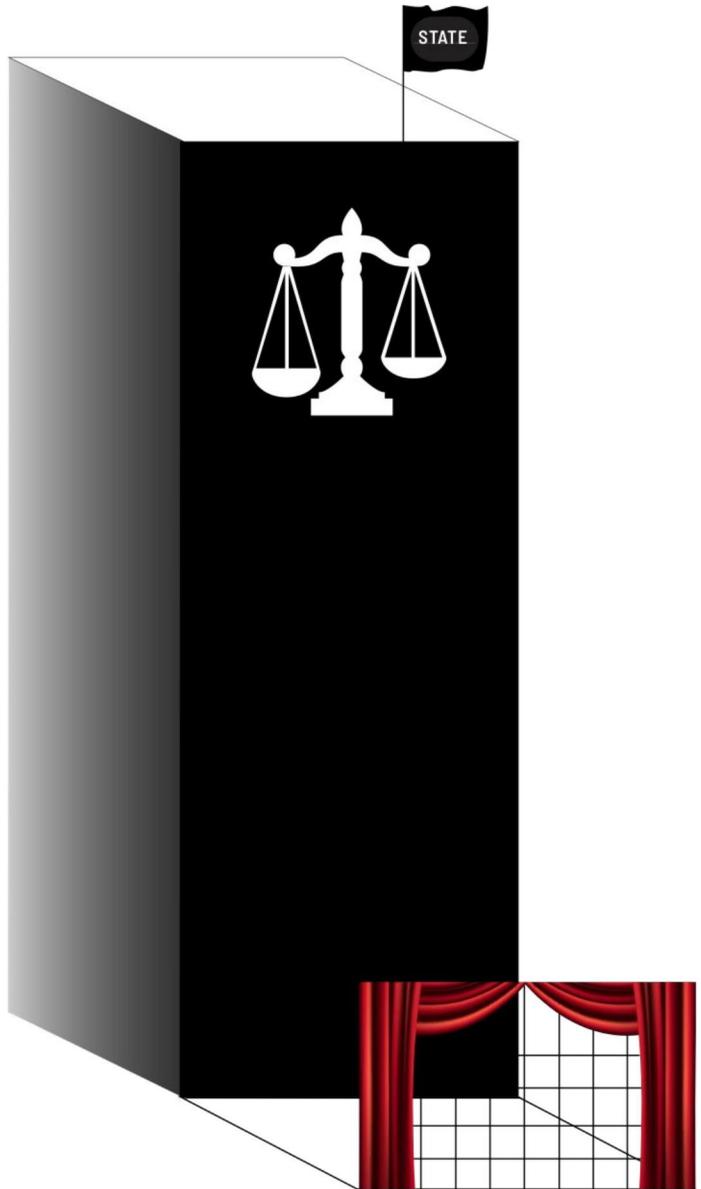
This book is meant to be a tool of self-defense against the police practice of interrogation. It is written from an anarchist point of view. I believe firmly that all authority is illegitimate and represents an impediment to a free and unencumbered life defined by the needs and wishes of each individual.

“All authority” includes the police, which is the essential structure that authoritarian systems are built upon. Wherever the police have existed, they have been the institution using violence to repress attempts to achieve radical and emancipatory change. The police and the criminal justice system are fundamentally reactionary, anti-emancipatory institutions. When people seek to practice self-defense to protect themselves from threats, the State disarms them and intervenes as the—very often ineffective—protector<sup>1</sup>. When people affected by conflict or oppression seek a remedy for their situation, the criminal justice system imposes itself as the arbitrator and grants only itself the right to decide on a solution. Through the social function of the police, the State relies on control, dependence on its institutions and punishment while stifling the creation of alternative dynamics based on trust, autonomy and transformation. The police and the courts are not only an insufficient response to interpersonal aggression and oppression; they reproduce and fan the flames of these harms.

The idea is not to combat the police while maintaining other forms of authority (Mafia- leaders, oppressors and aggressors) but to combat the very concept of authority in all forms.

---

<sup>1</sup> To learn more about self-defense as an emancipatory practice, see Elsa Dorlin’s book *Self Defense: A Philosophy of Violence*, Verso Books, 2022.



# **Before** the interrogation

*This chapter explains the role of the interrogation within the criminal justice system's processes and what is at stake.*

# 1. The context surrounding an interrogation

Several factors influence the **interrogation** process. First of all, the country you're in. Not all police forces have the same legal framework or amount of free rein. Next, the severity of the affair in question. Is it a "minor" drug bust or does the investigation fall into antiterrorism territory? The investigators might botch the job, or they might take it very seriously due to pressure from their superiors. It goes without saying that if you're being interrogated in the context of violence against law enforcement officers (following a protest, for example), it's likely that the inspectors will take it more personally than an interrogation related to theft at your company. All of these criteria, as well as the mood your interrogator(s) are in and their experience, will influence what happens. Furthermore, an interrogation can be a tiresome bit of administrative procedure just as easily as it can be a tense confrontation.

In general, the hierarchical relationships of our societies are (surprise, surprise) reproduced in the behavior of the police force and the criminal justice system. Spoiler alert: police institutions reproduce structural and systemic forms of violence such as racism, sexism and homophobia. It is very likely that the police officers you encounter will behave in racist, anti-Semitic, sexist and homophobic ways. Why? Because the societies they defend are structurally racist, anti-Semitic, sexist and homophobic and, consequently, the profession attracts people with racist, sexist, anti-Semitic and homophobic ideas<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> One example among many that illustrates the presence of racism, anti-Semitism and sexism within the French police can be found in the French podcast *Gardien de la paix* produced by Arte Radio. This podcast reveals the existence of a WhatsApp chat among several police officers glorifying white supremacy. Over the last two years, several similar cases of extreme-right groups of police officers have been made public. Following the discovery that around twenty members of an elite police unit in Frankfurt had ties to neo-Nazi movements, the whole unit was dissolved. In 2021, members of elite police units in Zurich and Basel, in

Through systemic oppressions, structures of power make some bodies more vulnerable than others. These vulnerabilities can also play a role in the confrontation that an interrogation represents. This is the privilege of people who fall within society's norms: remaining unburdened by the unceasing psychological weight of discrimination.

---

***Facing racism, Islamophobia, transphobia  
and other forms of discrimination  
clearly increases the psychological  
burden of such an ordeal.***

---

What's more, the circumstances of your arrest can affect your ability to withstand interrogation. If you're arrested in the street at the height of adrenaline, your emotional state won't be the same as it would be if you had received a written summons through the mail several days in advance. Being woken up abruptly by a police raid and being interrogated can be very distressing and disorienting, especially if you were woken up during the deepest phase of sleep.

Similarly, being held in custody in a cell for several hours or days can significantly weaken your resistance. On the other hand, knowledge of police procedures and interrogations can help you defend yourself.

All of these factors can determine how your interrogation will play out.

---

Switzerland, attended gun training exercises organized by members of neo-Nazi groups in Germany, which will lead to a parliamentary investigation

## 2. The criminal justice system



To understand the role of an interrogation in legal proceedings, it's first necessary to examine the role of the police in the criminal justice system. In most countries, the legal process has three actors: the police, the prosecutor<sup>3</sup>, and the judge(s). Each of these institutions has a different function and a particular hierarchical relationship to the others.

### *The police*

The police is the main actor for security<sup>4</sup>. Aside from maintaining order and keeping an eye on potential criminals, the police collects information for the courts. This information allows the courts to decide if a person has broken a law and if so, what punishment they should receive. In this process, the police force is at the bottom of the hierarchy, relegated to the task of gathering information. Police officers build a case file with as many details as possible in order to create the most comprehensive and accurate picture of the facts, the events, the context, the people involved and their motives, roles and intentions.

When the police believes that they have collected all possible information, the investigation ends and the case file is sent to the prosecutor. A slim case file means that the police has not done their

---

3 Depending on the country, this might be the "public prosecutor" or the "investigating judge."

4 This policing term refers to all professional work undertaken to defend, protect, impose and maintain the status quo as defined by the legal framework, the constitution, regulations, etc. There are other security actors besides the police: private security companies, intelligence agencies, forensic psychiatry institutions and prison administrators.

job well. It shows that the investigation was not conducted effectively enough for a judge to be able to rule on the case. This is a good thing for the person accused of wrongdoing.

### ***The prosecutor / public prosecutor / investigating judge***

Once the investigation is finished, the case file is sent to the prosecutor. Their work is to assess whether the file contains enough information for a ruling. Depending on the country, for some minor affairs, the prosecutor can propose a conviction without going through the courts. Based on this file, a sentence will be proposed to the defendant, who can either accept it or object by taking the case to court. This practice is called a “summary penalty order” and is typically used to relieve the courts of some of their work.

The prosecutor can decide to conduct their own interrogations in order to get a better idea of the situation than that provided by the investigation report alone. They may try to obtain more information and anticipate the defense strategies that you will use if you go on trial.

If the prosecutor thinks that the case file doesn’t have enough evidence to enable a conviction, they can either dismiss the case or send the file back to the police with a request for further information. The latter can be perceived as a rebuke to the police. Often, the prosecutor will already have started collaborating with the investigators by directing the investigation in a certain direction, or by requesting specific measures (wiretapping, raids, expansion of the case to include other affairs being examined, etc.).

### ***The judge***

Once the prosecutor determines that the case file is complete, they send it to the court, where a judge takes charge of it and prepares for a trial. Only at this point are you allowed to look at the file in order to know what information may be used against you during the trial.

The judge (or the jury, depending on the country) will rule on the case based on this file from the investigation and after interrogating you, and any other defendants and/or witnesses, once more. The trial verdict will depend on current laws, established case law, and the context of the affair at hand (as well as the judge’s mood).

Depending on the country, it may be possible to appeal and have the case reexamined. That is, the case will be sent to another court for another judgment. In the meantime, new information can be added to the case file by the defense or by the prosecution.

The police's work consists of filling out an investigation report on you with as much information as possible. Much of this information will be collected through interrogations.

---

***Police officers aren't the ones  
deciding whether you're guilty or  
innocent. That's neither part of their  
job nor within their jurisdiction.***

---

I've often witnessed interrogated people making the mistake of trying to convince the police of their innocence, hoping to be acquitted. That's the exact trap they want you to fall in. The desire to explain, to come up with excuses and lies, and to convince the investigators of a certain version of the facts leads interrogated people to collaborate with the police. They yield answers (truthful or not), explanations (real or false), and half-truths. All of these elements help the police do their work: investigating, checking, and signing off on the interrogated person's explanations; correlating, analyzing and constructing hypotheses that orient future investigative steps. It's not part of police officers' job to decide whether you're guilty or innocent. When a case is opened, it will either be transferred to the next level up in the hierarchy or dismissed if the investigation didn't provide enough information to continue the legal process and hold a trial. If you want to convince one of the actors in this process of your innocence, wait until you're at the trial, in front of the judge, with your lawyer present. Speaking up earlier puts you in danger.



[Cop speaking]

*"In general, when you arrest someone, it means you have a minimum level of evidence. However, this evidence isn't always sufficient to formally charge the individual. And accusation requires a hearing during which the suspect gives their version of the events that transpired (when this is possible)»<sup>5</sup>*

## **Presumption of innocence**

---

The presumption of innocence is a general principle that states that persons suspected of having violated a law are considered innocent as long as their guilt has not been formally and legally established. In most countries, the judge is the only authority that can decide whether an individual is guilty or innocent. This means that you can only be guilty, legally speaking, once the judge has given their verdict during a trial. Beforehand, you are merely a **suspect**, which means that you are suspected of having committed a crime.

This legal concept is founded on article 11 of the UN's 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which formulates it thus:

"Article 11. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence."

By now, almost all countries (from Russia to Iran, from the USA to France) have integrated this principle into their criminal code and constitutions in some manner. The extent to which they adhere to it remains open to interpretation. Concretely, this means that the State's actors (prosecutor, police) are responsible for finding evidence of your guilt. It is not your responsibility to prove your innocence. The police's job is to prove your guilt (or someone else's guilt). And every piece of information you give them helps them make progress.

---

<sup>5</sup> Statements gathered from police investigators by Diane Boszormenyi, for her work "L'influence des techniques policières d'interrogatoire sur la valeur de l'aveu. Étude à la lumière de la théorie des trois dimensions de la force publique de Monjardet," Faculté de droit et de criminologie, Université catholique de Louvain, 2019. All of the snippets of police testimony have been taken from this work and are denoted only with the pictograph [Cop speaking] from here onward.



[Cop speaking]

*“Before starting the hearing, we tend to already have elements that lean toward guilt, so in some sense you start the hearing thinking ‘that’s the one who did it.’ But we have to respect the presumption of innocence, because the defendant has the right to be merely a suspect. But in our minds we already have this evidence and we’re already very suspicious when we talk to them.”*



[Cop speaking]

*“The presumption of innocence is a legal formality that doesn’t reflect reality. I admit that as soon as I have significant evidence, I act as though the person has already been found guilty. That doesn’t prevent me from treating them with respect, but of course they’re presumed guilty. But if we have the slightest doubt, we’ll go in the other direction too. We can and do investigate both possibilities: 95% to find proof of guilt and 5% to find proof of innocence. The presumption of innocence is irrelevant to police work. Other principles make sense: respect for human rights and for the dignity of the accused. But the presumption of innocence has no practical application. It’s a legal formality and that’s it.”*

### *Parallel construction*

Imagine that an **informant** recruited by the police tells the police that they know that two people have committed a **crime**. Following this disclosure, the police searches the home of these two people, finds evidence pointing toward their guilt and takes them into custody. The police wiretap the phones of people who know the two suspects and they learn that a third person also participated in the **offense** in question. However, since the police rushed so quickly to investigate, they didn't submit a wiretap request to the judge (or the prosecutor / public prosecutor, depending on the system in that country). During the interrogations, the investigators lead the duo to betray the identity of their accomplice without letting them know that the police are already aware of it. Once the investigation is over, the police don't want to mention that they used illegal wiretaps or reveal the identity of their informant, since this person could still be useful to them in the future. The police will alter the case file to hide this information. Two parallel files are therefore created. The first one, with the complete and accurate record of the investigation, will stay at the police headquarters. The second one, created specifically to be rendered public during the trial, will have the sensitive information replaced by declassified information. The existence of the informant will remain unmentioned. Another motive will be spun up to justify the searches. The knowledge of the third person involved will be explained by the answers given during interrogation, without mentioning the use of illegal wiretaps.

This practice is called parallel construction. This method relies on a total lack of transparency and no police officer will say on the record that they use it. However, several cases of parallel construction have been revealed worldwide by investigative journalists<sup>6</sup>. The majority of the (ex-) police officers interviewed said that this practice was commonplace and even defended it as necessary for effective police work. Most of the well-known, mediatized cases took place in the USA. In my opinion, we can safely assume that this practice is widespread in all police forces, whether at the level of

---

<sup>6</sup> Human Rights Watch report "US: Secret Evidence Erodes Fair Trial Rights," January 2018

**a single investigator's personal initiative or systematically within the entire force.**

**Whatever may happen, interrogation is a useful tool for covering up holes in an investigation report and hiding sources. Information that police are already aware of can be "laundered" by nudging the interrogated persons to yield the same information and then concealing the real sources.**

### 3. The investigation

An investigation is launched so that the police can collect information about a suspected infringement of the law. When the investigation begins, it is based on specific charges such as unlawful trespassing, damage to property, or dealing in stolen goods. The police then seek to attribute responsibility to certain individuals for these offenses. During the investigation, the charges may change (what appeared at first to be mere trespassing may turn out to be breaking and entering or burglary). New offenses are often detected during an investigation, leading to the opening of new investigations. When they have elements in common (for example, several burglaries suspected to be by the same group), these different investigations may be handled as a “network of investigations” or “parallel investigations.” The police officers involved will keep each other informed about their respective cases. Furthermore, many police forces have interconnected databases: if an investigator wants to be kept up to date whenever a certain individual, weapon or vehicle is mentioned, they can create an alert and receive this information by email in real time.

During the investigation, the inspectors put the information they collect in a case file (or investigation file). The purpose of the case file is to give a clear picture of the context of the affair, the people involved, the sequence of events, the intentions, and so on. When the police officers think they’ve found all of the information they can or used up all of their resources (time and budget), the case file is closed and sent to the next level up in the hierarchy where a decision will be made about whether there is enough material to go to court.

Like intelligence agencies, the police also conduct surveillance work outside of specific investigations: they collect, process and analyze data about individuals, groups, networks and social climates. This data can be used to detect infractions and supplement future investigations.

## The case file (investigation file)

---

The case file contains a record of the entire investigative process, the exhibits, the material evidence found and analyzed (fingerprints, video surveillance footage, DNA, footprints, etc.), the witnesses' testimony and of course, the interrogation reports. These files often use a chronological structure to show the investigative path followed by the inspectors, the assumptions and the supported/rejected hypotheses. The final conclusion, however, is left up to the prosecutor or judge. The quality of the police work will be evaluated through this investigation file. The goal of this file is to paint a complete and accurate picture of the context of the infraction, the people involved, their connections (interpersonal context), the intentions, the ramifications and the sequence of events.

At the beginning of the legal process, when you're being interrogated by the police or are in custody or pre-trial detention, you aren't allowed access to your case file. This means that you have minimal knowledge of the context of the investigation, what the police are interested in, the information and clues they've already collected, and what other accused persons may have told them. Due to this power imbalance, this is a dangerous time for you to speak up. You can't know if you're yielding information if the police already has (or not), if you're contradicting something another person has said, if the police have information that would tell them that you're lying, etc. In these conditions, it isn't possible to defend yourself effectively except by remaining silent.

Only when the case is sent to court will you and your lawyer(s) be granted access to your case file. From that moment on, you must be notified—often through your lawyer(s)—if any other information is added to the file<sup>7</sup>. Once you've consulted your case file, you'll know what information the judge will be using to hand down their verdict. At that point, you can start to prepare the defense strategy that will harm you the least. If the investigation file contains little information, it might be wisest to maintain your silence rather than take the risk of getting trapped by a tricky question posed by the judge or prosecutors.

---

<sup>7</sup> To be confirmed based on the legal process in the country you are in.

## Proof and evidence

---

Evidence is information collected by the police during an investigation. For example:

- 🔥 Exhibit 1: Mr. X owns a red Honda
- 🔥 Exhibit 2: Tire tracks found at the site of the crime match Mr. X's car
- 🔥 Exhibit 3: A witness says they saw a red Honda at the site of the crime
- 🔥 Exhibit 4: A second witness says they spend Friday evening at a bar with Mr. X
- 🔥 Exhibit 5: Mr. X's daughter declared during his interrogation that his daughter knows how to drive even though she doesn't have her license yet.

These elements will be connected and presented to the police as hypotheses. By grouping exhibit 1, 2 and 3 together, one might speculate that Mr. X was present at the site of the crime with his car. Another hypothesis, taking exhibit 4 into consideration, is that Mr. X's car was present at the crime scene but Mr. X was not, since he was seen at a bar at the same time. Exhibit 5 leads to the new hypothesis that Mr. X's daughter took her father's car and was present at the crime scene.

The police try to establish the facts by proposing different hypotheses based on the evidence they've collected and elements that converge. Some elements may disprove certain hypotheses, which enables the police to proceed by elimination.

In all circumstances, the police works only with evidence. It's the judge who decides what constitutes proof according to the legal framework and their own interpretation. Can a single testimony be used as proof? Does an image from a surveillance camera carry more legal weight than the suspect's declarations? These questions and others will be battled out by the judge, lawyer(s) and prosecutor. In the end, the judge will make their decision based on the legal framework, established precedent, their mood and their personal beliefs. If the defense lawyers don't agree with the decision, they can appeal and have the case re-adjudicated by a higher court.

***This chapter highlights two important points.***

First of all, the real issue being debated in a trial is not whether you are guilty or innocent, but whether there is enough proof to convict you of the crime(s) you have been charged with. Once again, this shows the importance of this equation: the less information in your case file (which includes your own declarations), the better your chances are during the trial.

Secondly, the police's work is limited to collecting information and formulating hypotheses. This point is crucial because it counters the false belief that police officers decide whether you are guilty and that it's worth your time to try to convince them of your innocence. The need to explain oneself and justify one's actions to the police is often exploited to extract information that can be used against you or others.

## **The role of the interrogation in the investigation**

The importance of the interrogation in an investigation varies. During some investigations, the police officers are able to quickly collect a lot of material evidence (fingerprints, surveillance footage, testimonies) or proceed to an arrest in **flagrante delicto**. In these situations, the information provided by the interrogations isn't essential to close the investigation. In other investigations, the suspect's declarations will have little effect on the judge's assessment of the affair. The interrogated person will doubtlessly be placed under less pressure, since the advancement of the investigation doesn't depend on their declarations.

On the other hand, some investigations are based on tenuous suspicions with no material evidence to back them up. There might be a single clue that cast suspicion to the interrogated person, leading them to be brought before the police. Here, the importance of extracting information through interrogation is crucial. With no response from you, the person interrogated, the investigation cannot advance and will end up being dismissed. In this case, it's likely that the pressure levied during the interrogation will be intense.

## ***Investigators never communicate about a lack of evidence in their investigation.***

---

However, they may make you think that they have a lot of information about you in order to give the impression that they have the upper hand, while in reality their file is almost empty. Nothing is more frustrating than watching a judge convict people who incriminated themselves solely through their own declarations. And yet, this happens frequently.

The interrogation can also direct the investigation with a specific angle: it can yield clues about whom to surveil (through wiretaps, shadowing, or searches) or about certain places to look for leads. For example, if you reveal the identity of your co-conspirators during your interrogation, it is very likely that these people's homes will be searched. The police may find tools there that match elements at the scene of the crime. This allows them to advance their investigation.

### **Confession**

---

*Confession is the holy grail of proof (police proverb)*

Confession occurs when a person tells their version of the story without responding solely to a targeted question. It's the moment when a person acknowledges and/or confesses what transpired. A confession can be complete (the interrogated person gives up all information that the police are interested in) or partial (the interrogated person acknowledges some of the facts while remaining silent about or denying others).

However, confessions are never taken at face value by the police or by the judge. A person may lie to protect someone, or confess part of the truth to hide another part. A confession doesn't have more or less legal weight than concise answers to targeted questions.

Throughout police literature, there are two schools of thought concerning the importance of confession in interrogation strategies. The older, classic school of thought places confession at the heart of the interrogation. The interrogation is set up with the aim of leading the interrogated person toward a final confession that is as

close as possible to the truth of the matter. The investigators evaluate the suspect's declarations and check their **alibis** so they can distinguish confessions from falsehoods.

---

***All declarations made by interrogated people fall into one of two categories: confessions and lies.***

---

A confession implies that the interrogated person acknowledges their guilt, at least partially. One theory within this school of thought is that when a suspect starts to confess, they will usually begin by minimizing the gravity of the events and their own implication by providing partial confessions. The investigators then want to verify every element one by one. To do so, they push the interrogated person to elaborate on the details of the affair until they have enough material to confirm the story or spot contradictions that would indicate a lie. To encourage a person to confess, one strategy consists of emphasizing their internal anxiety in the form of guilt or shame. Anxiety directed outward in the form of anger, distrust or contempt will, however, hinder the transition to confession. Strategies like emotional contagion [page 61] and the creation of a sense of personal connection will be favored [page 58].

Police officers assume that the suspect will use a defense mechanism to justify their acts and maintain their own self-confidence. Interrogators aim to break down suspects' resistance by identifying and exploiting their psychological weaknesses (feelings of guilt, grief, pride, naivety, etc.). They may also take advantage of logistical factors such as illness, fatigue, stress, social isolation and food deprivation.

The second school of thought is less preoccupied with confession, focusing instead on the search for the elements that the case file needs. Interrogation isn't the cornerstone of the investigation—it's on the same level as other means like material evidence, trace evidence and testimony. The strategies used here aim to lead the interrogated

person to talk about specific topics that the police need more information about in order to advance the investigation. This could mean noting down lies or contradictions that will be used against the suspect, or declarations that reveal concrete information to the police (number of people involved, the connections between these people, the **modus operandi**, etc.). The “quicksand,” “good cop/bad cop,” and “pinning the blame on someone else” strategies will be used [see chapter 6, “Interrogation strategies”, page 53].

The investigation starts with the material evidence and only then proceeds to the declarations or confessions of the interrogated person. The police officers will try to weaken the interrogated person’s ability to reason and make decisions by heightening their fear, uncertainty and anxiety, especially through confinement and/or isolation.



*“We know immediately whether it will be possible to get a confession out or not, or at least advance the investigation, but that’s without any preconceived ideas—it depends on the elements of evidence we have and the feeling we’ve got about it. It’s not manipulation. We just try to lead the person in the direction we’re interested in.”*



# **During** the interrogation

*This chapter examines the practice of interrogation: preparation, techniques and strategies.*

## 4. Preparation

### **Profiling**

---

Before an interrogation, the inspectors in charge of the case will create a profile of the suspect. Depending on the importance of the investigation, the profile could be very detailed and precise or contain just a few basic character traits.

To get an idea of how you might behave during an interrogation, the police may use any information available: your financial situation, educational background, social environment, family and professional relationships, hobbies, sensitivities and values. If you've already had a run-in with the police, the reports from your previous interrogations will be consulted in order to anticipate your reactions. If you've been arrested and placed in custody prior to your interrogation, the officers will note your attitude toward them, the level of stress and anxiety engendered by the deprivation of your freedom, the ease with which you express yourself and your choice of words. Information available about your medical condition (alcoholism, drug addiction, chronic disease, etc.) can prove useful to them for the investigation at large as well as for the interrogation. Some police forces receive basic psychiatry training so that investigators can create a psychological profile of the interrogated person by exploiting psychological conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

This is what intelligence is all about: gathering information to gain a strategic advantage and power over your adversary.

---

***You don't know anything about the police officers in front of you—but they have a rather precise idea of who you are.***

---

## Information classification

---

*I know that you know what I know that you know (police saying)*

Unlike you, the police officers know what's in your case file. This gives them an advantage that shouldn't be underestimated. When deciding on their interrogation strategy, the investigators will divide their knowledge into three categories.

- 🔥 Information that can/should be shared with you.
- 🔥 Information that can be shared with you if it might encourage you to yield other information in return.
- 🔥 Information that should not be shared with you under any circumstances.

Information in the second category will be communicated to you if the police think that they will be able to get more information out of you this way. Basically, they'll share if it they think it'll make you talk. I've often hear from people who say they answer questions posed by the police with the intention of deducing information about the status of the investigation without giving up anything themselves. This approach seems dangerously optimistic to me—even more so when we know that inspectors make a list in advance of the information that should not be given to suspects. What's more, we know that another of their strategies is to take advantage of suspects' overconfidence [page 64].



[Copspeaking]

*"You aren't obligated to give up all the information you have at once. You use what you have. It's like a box of tools. Sometimes there's nothing in there and it's just a poker game. Sometimes you have some tools, but you don't have to pull everything out right away. You have to take them out at the right time. That's what experience teaches you: which tools to use when, and how to wield them with precision."*

Exemples:

- 🔥 Information that can/should be shared with you.  
*You are accused of rioting, protesting in an unauthorized protest and damaging property.*
- 🔥 Information that can be shared with you if it might encourage you to yield other information in return.  
*You are specifically suspected of having participated in looting a store during the protest in question.*
- 🔥 Information that should not be shared with you under any circumstances.  
*Your phone is being wiretapped and that's how the police know who you were at the protest with. Raids and arrests are now planned.*

### **Anticipating defense strategies**

---

The last step of preparing for an interrogation, after your profile has been studied, is to prepare your defense strategies. Do you risk presenting an alibi that will have to be verified before continuing the process? Will you lie? Will you try to cover up your friends' involvement or will you accuse an accomplice? Will you confess some of the facts in the hope of hiding some of the truth? Will you have the sense to protect yourself by staying silent and refusing to answer their questions? How will you react when you're confronted with your lies, pieces of evidence, and the declarations from the other accused person(s) and witnesses?

---

***These elements will affect the interrogation strategies and techniques that the inspectors will use against you or choose to forgo.***

---

# 5. General manipulation techniques

*"Manipulation consists of creating an image of reality that seems perfectly real."  
Philippe Breton*

I define "manipulation" here as the intent to influence and control the impressions, thoughts and choices of another person for one's own benefit. Manipulating someone means denying them the liberty to make choices freely and consciously. This is entirely counter to anarchist ideas, which hold that individuals have the right to live free lives by and for themselves.

For several years now, actors in social psychology have been naming and characterizing patterns of manipulation that take on different names depending on the context: "harassment," in the context of patriarchal oppression; "mobbing," when it takes place in the workplace; and "abuse" and "toxic relationships" in one's personal life.

Police interrogation fits neatly into this list of different contexts for manipulation. An interrogation is an interaction that takes place under duress and is based on an unequal power relationship. The police use manipulation tactics that are frequently found in all of the other contexts mentioned above. However, there is a nuanced difference between manipulation techniques and strategies.

- 🔥 Techniques are short and concrete elements of manipulation (the construction of a sentence or the tone of voice used).
- 🔥 Strategies stretch over a longer time frame. A strategy may span the entire interrogation or several interrogations.

Here is a series of manipulation techniques often used in interrogations.

## Provoking sympathy

---

Some police strategies need the interrogated person to feel sympathy for the police officers. This requires flipping reality on its head. Despite the fact that the police are investigating you, surveilling you, locking you up and seeking proof that would allow the criminal justice system to punish you, they try to convince you that their intentions are benign and that they respect you. Their goal is to make you lower your guard so that you're more vulnerable to strategies based on the human connection between the police officer and the suspect.

How do people make themselves seem likable? Sociologists who have weighed in on this question have noted several factors that influence us without our conscious awareness: physical appearance, things in common (this officer has a son like me; that officer supports the same hockey team as me), familiarity, positive associations with contact (the police officer who does you the "favor" of giving you food when you're very hungry will be associated with the pleasure of finally getting to eat). Flattery can also be wielded by investigators to manipulate you. Unlike compliments, flattery aims to seduce you into doing or saying something specific. Flattery makes you more trusting and less guarded and puts you in an agreeable mood for whatever comes next.

## The principle of reciprocity

---

*"When someone gives you something, offer them something in return"*

*Social norm*

The principle of reciprocity comes from the social norm that when you receive something, you must give something in return. We all learn this idea as we grow up. If you take, you must give in return. If you disobey this rule, you expose yourself to negative social pressure and judgment. You could be called selfish, a free rider, a parasite, rude, or ungrateful. This manipulation technique exploits the feeling of owing a debt, which is created by receiving something (that you may not have even requested).

During interrogations, this technique is used in an especially unequal power relationship. The favors that some inspectors "give" you are in reality compensating for the things that these same inspectors are depriving you of while you're in detention. They might bring

you a glass of water, allow you to make a phone call, or let you have a visitor or a book. These “favors” are used to make you feel that you owe something. As soon as you hesitate to answer their questions, you’ll be reminded of the “favors” they did you with the expectation that you pay them back with politeness.

### **Listening with eyes averted**

---

Listening with eyes averted is exactly what it sounds like: the police officer interrogating you looks elsewhere or does something else while you’re talking. They might not even look up when you arrive in the interrogation room. The idea behind this tactic is simple: destabilization. It makes you feel uncomfortable and gives you the impression that what you say is trivial and that this interrogation isn’t important either, just a tiresome formality to get over with. It also makes it seem like they’ve already made up their minds about you. Your response to being treated this way might be to try to get their attention in any way possible and justify your behavior during the events that transpired. In doing so, you might yield more information than the police could have gotten out of you via a confrontational approach.

### **Giving a wrong answer to learn the right one**

---

This technique consists of asking a question that has something wrong in it, intentionally. This plays off of your desire to set the record straight and may cause you to give up more information than you would have if you’d been asked the question in a more neutral way.

Take the example of these two questions.

1. Why did you go to Paris?
2. Did you go to Paris to see your lover?

The first question doesn’t seem emotionally charged at all. It’s an open question and a fairly neutral one that could be answered neutrally. Clearly, the police want to know why you went to Paris.

The second question suggests that the police already know why you went to Paris. It insinuates that you have a lover. The police

officers asking you this question know, of course, that this isn't why you went to Paris. On the other hand, they don't know your real reason for going there and they hope that you'll give a more complete answer by seeking to correct the error than you would have if the question had been asked more neutrally.



*"[Interrogation is like] a chess game, or a poker game, where you have the right to bluff. You have other players in front of you. They might not tell the whole truth, or they might arrange the elements of it as they prefer. You have cards in your hand and the other guy doesn't know what you have. So you can bluff. You can tell a lie in order to learn the truth."*

*"It all depends on the inspector. Some prefer to threaten while others give wrong information on purpose to learn the truth. I only work with the truth. I'm an honest person."*

## Creating suspicion

---

*"That's not what your friend told us"  
Police insinuation*

Creating suspicion with a group is a good way to weaken it, create dissent, lead some people to betray others and prevent them from using the strength of the collective. There are many types of manipulation used to sow the seeds of doubt. They range from pure and simple lies to casual insinuations about what your friends might have said or done.

Even if you don't want to pay attention to them, you pick up on the underlying message. Since this message is typically emotionally charged, it's not easy to forget it, even if you don't believe in it. The danger in these comments, which you lend no credence to at the time, is that they can resurface at the slightest hint that they may be true, or in moments of weakness and emotional exhaustion. The message has been heard and received.

One way to defend yourself against this technique is to unequivocally reject all direct and indirect accusations made by the police

about your friend(s). If you can't independently verify any claim made by your investigators, assume that it's false. There will always be time to check it later, when the danger of the interrogation is in the past. Don't forget that unlike your friends or co-defendants, the police officers are not your friends and aren't trying to help you. Their work consists of breaking down your emotional defenses so that you will make statements that will fill their investigative file.



"True love, huh?" A mocking smile crawled onto the lieutenant's face.

Lenz shrugged. "Seems like it."

The lieutenant stared at him again, then shook his head.

"When I think about your background and the considerable criminal effort you've expended to evade us, your attempt to flee seems ridiculous. What's the saying? 'When the elephant gets cocky, he dances on glass?'"

He should have offered him cigarettes rather than popular wisdom.

"You know what I think? That you're just leaving us out of love for your wife."

"You're not totally wrong there."

That's what they'd agreed on: if they were caught during their getaway, they'd say that there had been no political reason behind their intention to cross the border, only the desire to reunite their family. But was Hannah sticking to the story? Maybe she'd already told the truth.

"True love, then! Unfortunately, your wife told us a different story."

The absence of cigarettes today was probably intentional. The lieutenant wanted to play offense this time.

"You went to the Leipzig fair several times, didn't you? We all know what happens there between men and women."

"Could you be more specific?"

"Of course. Your wife expressed some doubts about your so-called 'true love.' And also about your faithfulness."

Lenz had to smile.

“Is this what you call psychological warfare?”

“Don’t you believe me?”

“No, not until my wife repeats it in my presence.”

“Do you think we’re trying to turn you and your wife against each other?”

“Let’s say that it’s not the furthest thing from my mind.”

“Well then, you must have a lot of confidence in us.”

The lieutenant raised an eyebrow, opened a drawer and threw an open pack of cigarettes onto the table.

“I forgot that you were a smoker.”

This is what the interrogators were taught: to be kind and generous one day and relentless about the smallest details the next. One day a sympathetic companion, and the next a harsh judge. They know that in your cell, you’ll repeat over and over every word pronounced here. They count on the fact that the most trivial remark, tossed off carelessly, can get lodged in your head until you begin to doubt yourself. Does Hannah really think that you’ve been romancing other women in Leipzig?

Translated extract from the book *Krokodil im Nacken*, Klaus Kordon 2008

## Denigrating and disparaging

Denigrating a person so they feel worthless, doubt their own capacities, lose confidence in themselves and develop emotional dependence is a classic tactic used in toxic relationships as well as in interrogations. This technique is in opposition to strategies based on creating a personal connection between the investigator and the suspect. It’s only used when the investigators believe that an antagonistic approach is more likely to succeed than a friendly one.

To get at you, they’ll use moral judgments and critical comments to target subjects that they know are sensitive for you. They may bring your contradictions and your doubts to the forefront and pin the blame on you for your past mistakes and the difficult situation that you’re currently in. They will push you to think that you shouldn’t have done such-and-such thing and that you made stupid decisions. They make you feel guilty and worthless. Maybe you already felt this way, but these feelings will certainly be amplified by police manipulation.

As a general rule, no criticism from a person identified as manipulatory should be considered worth your time. I'm not talking about constructive, empathetic and caring criticism from people who want the best for you. Here's the scoop: The cops aren't your friends. They don't care about your well-being or your intellectual development and have no reason to give you constructive criticism. They don't care who you are, what's important for you or how you feel. They have their own interests that have nothing to do with you—just their daily work and their investigation. Whenever they tell you otherwise, remember who locked you in this room and is holding you there against your will.

---

### **Exploit their beliefs and weaknesses**

---

Each and every one of us has our own beliefs, values and susceptibilities due to our lived experience, education, religious and spiritual beliefs, patterns learned and replicated since childhood, and examples shown to us by society. Some susceptibilities come from our experiences and/or the deconstruction work we undertake to reclaim our lives as we wish to live them, breaking from the societal norms surrounding us. Our beliefs, other than those that come from deconstructing our experiences, are acquired early in life and are rarely questioned.

---

***During an interrogation, the police will focus on identifying your weaknesses and your value system. They want to turn them against you so they can influence your emotions and feelings***

---

For example, to make you feel guilty or doubt yourself, they might try to convince you that your actions contradicted your values.

Here are a few classic beliefs that are prevalent in Western societies, unconsciously assimilated by individuals in these societies and

rarely questioned. These are black-and-white statements that don't accommodate the nuances, contexts and circumstances in which they may be evoked.

- 🔥 You have to know everything, otherwise you're ignorant and stupid.
- 🔥 You can't make mistakes. Making mistakes isn't a normal part of learning—it's a mark of stupidity.
- 🔥 You have to show other people that you're educated, intelligent and interesting. Otherwise, you're worthless.
- 🔥 To be valued, you have to be competent in every possible situation.
- 🔥 You can't change your mind, otherwise you're unstable and untrustworthy.
- 🔥 Only idiots refuse to change their minds (the opposite of the preceding norm).
- 🔥 When you engage in an argument, you have to keep up blow for blow until it's over, even if you change your mind.
- 🔥 You should never be ungrateful; you should always be thankful for what you receive, even if you didn't ask for anything.
- 🔥 If someone gives you something, you must give them something in return or you're ungrateful.
- 🔥 You must be generous.
- 🔥 You must be friendly and likable, or you're mean, insensitive and aggressive, no matter what the circumstances are.
- 🔥 People should be punished for being mean or not following the rules.
- 🔥 You have to make the right decision 100% of the time. Otherwise, you're stupid.

These societal beliefs can easily be turned against you. For example, by showing that you're ignorant about a given subject, your investigators can make you feel like you're not smart and lower your self-confidence.

## The recency effect

---

The recency effect can be used to unconsciously influence someone through the way a sentence is constructed. We are more likely to remember words placed at the beginning and end of sentences that we hear. Especially when these sentences are long and complicated. Especially when we're exhausted by an interrogation session that has been going on for hours. Especially when the inspectors are trying to distract us right before asking questions by switching suddenly to a more aggressive posture or yielding a piece of previously unknown information.

### Example of positive conditioning

*It's your choice, of course, to use your right to silence, even if it makes you seem suspicious in front of the judge—it's well-known that only criminals keep their mouths shut.*

### Example of negative conditioning

*Even though it'll make you seem suspicious in front of the judge, it's your choice to use your right to silence, although it's well-known that only criminals keep their mouths shut.*

## **S earfishin g**

---

Imagine that you withdraw money in dollars at the bank and the employee says, "We haven't seen a lot of people withdrawing dollars lately." Without thinking, you reply, "Yes, I'm going to Florida for two weeks to see my family."

Without even having been asked a question, you give two pieces of information about yourself: you're going to Florida for two weeks and you have family there. This anodyne situation could be much more dangerous in the context of an interrogation. A statement made to you, rather than a pointed question, gives the impression that the conversation is unimportant and even that the police aren't necessarily trying to get information about the subject. The statement can also be made with an air of suspicion to nudge you to explain yourself.

## **Creating hope and disappointment**

---

Evoking a promise to someone will set off a whole process of imagination and positive projection related to the hope of seeing the promise fulfilled. When the promise is broken, disillusionment and disappointment set in. The police may make false promises to you to push you to emotional exhaustion. Custody or temporary detention is an ideal setting for this tactic. Since you're deprived of many things, the police can dangle lots of favors in front of you (a phone call, the right to have a book in your cell, the right to receive visitors, etc.) and then disappoint you by refusing them in the end. This manipulation is even more insidious when the police officers accuse you of being responsible for their refusal (and therefore your own disappointment). "If you'd been more cooperative, we could've made a gesture for you."



The warden led Lenz down the hallway and up to the first floor [...] He had to wait two or three minutes before going up another flight of stairs and arriving in the red-carpeted waiting area. He imagined that at that very moment, behind the doors to his left and right, people were interrogating, listening, denying, admitting, confessing remorse and gathering their courage. And as for himself? How would he behave?

The warden took him to a door that he had stood in front of before. The interrogator waiting inside for him was not new to him, either. But this time, he was wearing a lieutenant's uniform. Smiling, he waited for Lenz to take a seat on the stool before asking, as if it had been more than a hair over two days since they'd last seen each other, "How are you?"

"Given the circumstances, fine."

"Glad to hear it!"

Which had to mean, "I don't believe you. I know how much you're suffering and how relieved you are that we've brought you in to talk again." Lenz averted his gaze. Lying with his words was easy, but lying with his eyes was much harder.

On the table in front of the desk was a pack of Kabinett brand cigarettes, open but still full. Did the inspector smoke? Or had he put the cigarettes there for him?

"Do you have any requests?"

The cop in Sofia had asked him the same question. During their training, did they take their cues from hotel receptionists?

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"I'd like something to read. You must have some books in here, right?"

This got an amused chuckle.

"Oh really? You won't cooperate with us and you're so arrogant that you demand something to read as a reward?"

## The door-in-the-face technique

---



[Film]

“All right, I'm listening! But I'm not here to beat around the bush. If you make me wait, I'll throw you in a cell [...]”

“I'm ready to explain myself, but I won't name any names.”

“All right, we'll play at X. Each time you mention someone, you'll name them X<sub>1</sub>, X<sub>2</sub>, X<sub>3</sub> and so on.”

“In the summer of '97, I met up with an old friend and nationalist, X<sub>1</sub>...”

Extract from the film *Les Anonymes*, Pierre Schoeller, 2014

The door-in-the-face technique consists of making a wildly unreasonable request to the target, which they will refuse. However, this first request increases the chances of a second request being accepted. The second request will be much less unreasonable, but problematic enough that it wouldn't have been accepted without this framing. In the example given above, the inspector is asking the interrogated person to reveal the names of their accomplices, which they refuse categorically. Then, when they're asked to tell the story of what happened using fake names (X<sub>1</sub>, X<sub>2</sub>, etc.) the person agrees. Practically the same information is revealed, and due to the cross-verifications that the police will be able to do, it's very likely that they will manage to deduce the identities of the accomplices.

## Priming and sham negotiating

---

Pretending to negotiate is a common police tactic for extracting information. The negotiations are a sham because the terms are deceitful and the police often promise something not within their power to deliver. When the police promise that in exchange for information, they'll tell the judge about your honesty, or that you won't lose custody of your child, or that your possessions that were confiscated during the investigation will be returned, or that so-and-so won't hear about what you did, it's nothing but lies. The police have no authority in these domains and don't have the power to decide

what will happen to you during the remainder of the legal process. It's up to the public prosecutor or the judges.

It's not unheard-of for the inspectors to draw information out of you through false promises, then change the terms of the agreement and ask you more questions while threatening to call off the deal if you don't answer. This is called priming, and it's a very effective strategy. You accept a deal, because the conditions seem acceptable to you. At the last minute, the conditions change, but you continue to go along with the situation because you feel that you've already committed. Since you've already gone so far, it'd be better to keep going than to stop short or back up. And yet, you wouldn't have accepted this deal if it had been presented in its final form from the start! Unfortunately, a person who learns the full truth of the situation after having made a decision based on false information will likely stick to their decision.

Negotiating with the police places you in a very precarious position because you have no control over external factors and you have no way to put pressure on the police to ensure that they keep their promises.

### **Avoidance bait**

---

This technique is used to determine whether a subject is sensitive for you or not. During the interrogation, the investigators think you may be hiding information about a certain subject. After a few accusatory questions about it, they move abruptly to something completely off-topic to gauge your reaction. If you seem relieved and eager to talk about the new topic, this will be interpreted as a sign that you're trying to avoid the first subject and that you might have something to hide.

#### Exemple

- *Were you in Paris last Monday?*
- *No.*
- *Come on, stop lying, we know you were there.*
- *No, I wasn't.*
- *Why lie? We know you go there to see Louis. Anyway, hold on, what's the Paris soccer team called? St-Gervains? St-Germain?*

Taking the bait

- *Haha, no, it's Paris-St-Germain, PSG.*

- *Oh that's right, they're a pretty good team, aren't they?*

- *Yes, that's right.*

Not avoiding the topic

- *Huh? What does that have to do with anything? I'm telling you that I wasn't in Paris that day.*

## 6. Interrogation strategies

Unlike the manipulation techniques listed earlier, the strategies that follow unfold over a longer time frame. They span the entire interrogation session, or even several sessions. While manipulation techniques are used spontaneously in reaction to the police-suspect dynamic, interrogation strategies are chosen and prepared in advance according to the profile of the person to be interrogated.

**Good cop , bad cop**

**g**

**g**



[Simulation]

You're sitting in a small office with concrete walls. An especially aggressive police officer is raising his voice at you, gesticulating wildly, insulting you and threatening you. Suddenly, the police officer behind him interrupts. She sits down facing you and looks at you calmly. She says reassuringly that it's not as bad as it seems, that it'll be over soon, that you just have to answer a few little questions and then—she promises—you'll be able to leave. Do you give in? No? The first cop slams his fist on the table, glares at you, threatens to put you in a cell for the whole week, and asks you very specific questions that you have no desire to answer. When the "nice" cop sees that this subject is uncomfortable for you, she cuts her colleague off and asks you about another topic that seems inoffensive and that you're happy to talk about if only to ensure that the "mean" cop keeps his distance and avoids sensitive subjects. Except that

her questions lead you bit by bit back to the subject you want to avoid and the “mean” cop will take any opportunity to jump down your throat again. Will you resist? Welcome to the good cop/bad cop strategy, a classic in police TV shows.

For this interrogation strategy, one of the police officers will be aggressive and threatening and attack you directly about unpleasant and uncomfortable subjects. The other one will act reassuring, calm and almost benevolent. You’re like a ping-pong ball sent back and forth between them until you crack. The role of the “bad” cop is to put pressure on you, push you to your breaking point, wear you out and scare you. When the second inspector thinks you’re about to snap, or when an especially sensitive topic is brought up, they take over. They reassure you, offer you a glass of water, suggest a break, and calmly promise you things before going back to the questions. “We just want an answer to this question. Then, you can go home.”

Police officers use special signals such as code words, body language or intonation to work together and agree on when to switch back and forth. The two roles may not be present at the same time. You may first have several sessions with “bad” cops only. Then, two calm and reassuring cops show up. You’re well aware that if you don’t cooperate, the mean and aggressive cops will come back.

Moving quickly from one emotion to another leads to emotional exhaustion. This attempt to influence your emotions through a specific behavior is called emotional contagion. As it turns out, the emotional state of the person in front of us influences our own emotions. Meeting an aggressive person can make us angry, afraid or stressed while meeting a quiet and gentle person can make us feel calm (and maybe also distrustful). This tactic can be used to influence an interrogated person’s emotional state through the different interrogators and their behavior. It leads to psychological exhaustion. Due to the stress of the interrogation and the fear of being confronted by the “bad” cop again, the risk of ceding more easily to the “good” cop is high.

Depending on the atmosphere that the police wants to create, the chairs will be arranged differently: face-to-face for a more confrontational encounter, or at right angles to each other at the table to make you feel more comfortable and amenable to collaboration.

## More comfortable atmosphere

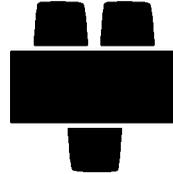
Police officer



Suspect

## Hostile atmosphere

Police officer



Suspect

Nothing will protect you better than staying silent, or repeating over and over again, "I have nothing to tell you." The sooner the police officers understand that you won't be emotionally ensnared by their manipulations, the sooner they'll leave you alone.

## Quicksand

---



[Simulation]

In the same little office with concrete walls, you're sitting across from two inspectors who are asking you a question that you don't want to answer truthfully. You lie without knowing that they are already aware of the truth. This question was just a test to see if you would lie or not. Now they know that you will. So they push you to lie again and again. Each lie leads to a new question that you have to quickly invent an answer to that fits with the rest of your story. It's not easy to remember exactly what you've already told them. Suddenly, one of the police officers declares triumphantly that they know you're lying, that they have proof that you've contradicted yourself or said something untrue. You feel that you've lost your credibility, that the judge will know that you tried to lie and that this behavior will make

you seem suspicious. Whether you admit this out loud in the hope of saving face or whether you continue to deny it, your lies have been laid bare and this evidence will be held against you during the trial. The temptation to give in and provide a full confession is very strong.

The quicksand strategy consists of letting you lie and even encouraging you to continue. It always starts with a test question that the police already knows the answer to. What you say in response lets them know if you will keep lying as the interrogation continues. If you do lie, you'll be pushed to provide more and more lies. Each time you invent something new, the interrogators will seize it and use it as a basis for more questions. Basically, you'll sink under the weight of your own lies. The more false information you provide, the greater the risk is that you'll contradict yourself or other evidence already collected for the investigation (testimonies, trace evidence, clues, etc.).

---

***Lying off the top of your head requires tremendous concentration, lots of imagination and a very good memory.***

---

The police are taking notes throughout the interrogation while you rarely have the ability to take notes. And when they ask you the same questions two or three weeks later, you have to give the same answers, down to the smallest details. If you contradict yourself, you lose consistency and credibility until finally your house of lies falls to pieces. Since you don't know what evidence the police has already collected against you, how can you know if lying will help or hurt your case? The police's goal is to encourage you to lie, then expose the lies for what they really are. This way, they'll show you that they know you're lying and that you're no longer trustworthy.

Silence is a better means of self-defense than lies. When you try to hide the truth through lies, you take the risk of revealing much more information than if you had stayed silent.

### **Funnel strategy and creating a sense of commitment**



In the same room with concrete walls, today's two police officers seem kind, open and relaxed. They start by asking you open questions that have nothing to do with the reason for your detainment in this room. It seems more like a chat between friends at a café, not at all like an interrogation under duress. Their questions seem unserious and unthreatening. You can answer them truthfully without worrying that your answers will be held against you. Besides, you're concerned that if you refuse to answer, their friendly attitude will evaporate and things will get more difficult. Yet little by little, they turn the conversation toward more sensitive subjects. Alarms start going off in your head. You hesitate and give evasive responses. They can tell that your behavior has changed and they make it known that they find it suspicious. When you refuse to answer, the inspectors act astonished by your silence. They say that you've answered all of their questions so far and if you stop now, it means that you obviously have something to hide and that you're guilty. The trap snaps shut.

Asking open questions with no real stakes attached to them is a common practice for the beginning of an interrogation, no matter who the suspect is. If you answer, the inspectors have this much leverage against you if you then stop giving responses. "What's the problem? Why won't you answer anymore? Are you trying to hide something from us?"

With this strategy, the police are trying to encourage commitment on the part of the suspect. They lead you to participate and become emotionally invested in the interrogation process. The more questions you answer and the more information you give, the harder it is to stop or say you don't want to continue the conversation. If you change your mind, you're effectively doubting the choices you made earlier and taking back what you said, which can be psychologically difficult.

Here again, silence is your friend. Refusing right off the bat to answer any questions from the police, even if they seem innocuous, leaves the inspectors with no way to implement the funnel strategy. If you don't give any answers, they can't build a trap with them.



Comrade Knut took some more notes, then leaned back with a sigh and acted dumbfounded once again: he simply could not understand why someone would want to cut all ties with his past, in any circumstance, just for a woman. Of course, East Germany wasn't a land of milk and honey. You had to work hard if you wanted to reach a certain level of prosperity. But that was the same everywhere. Besides, East Germany didn't have any exploitation and those who wanted to work had a guaranteed future. In competitive capitalist societies, as their own Western critiques confirm, everyone was constantly trying to get a leg up by stepping on others. It was every man for himself all the time in West Germany. Did Lenz want a life like that? Did he want the world to stay stuck in that state?

"Didn't you learn in school that in capitalism, men are but tools in the hands of those who own the means of production, and that they are only fed so that they can be exploited further? We want to create a world in which workers have power, a truly democratic and socialist Germany. Isn't it worth hard work to get there?"

Careful, Lenz! This is another trap. They're not yet satisfied with what they've learned about you so far.

"You have nothing to say?"

Lenz kept quiet. There were borders for everything. The Stasi wouldn't let him cross their border freely, and he wouldn't let

the Stasi cross his. After all, he wasn't a vending machine that would spit out answers after being fed a few cigarettes.

"Do you think everything is great here? If so, why did you want to leave?"

Lenz wanted to keep his mouth shut, but the desire to speak up was too strong.

"Maybe I'm like the stupid kangaroo that jumps out of the zoo and leaves behind all of his creature comforts—food, calm and safety—because he has a vague idea of what the faraway Australia is like."

"A zoo! Aha."

The lieutenant wrote down the word.

"So you felt 'trapped' with us?"

You see, Lenz, it's so easy to betray yourself.

"Let's just say that I felt a bit cooped up."

"And what made you feel cooped up?"

Translated extract from the book *Krokodil im Nacken*, Klaus Kordon 2008

## Unconscious acceptance

---

- Are you George Jackson<sup>8</sup>?
- Yes.
- Have you had an interaction with the police in the past?
- Yes.
- Looking at your file, I see that you're married and have two children. Is that right?
- That's right.

These questions, staged as a mere formality at the beginning of an interrogation, seem wholly innocuous or even pointless. And yet, they're the key to a manipulation strategy from the marketing world: unconscious acceptance. This technique is used at the beginning of an interrogation to get a dialogue going with the interrogated

---

8 Homage to George Jackson (1941-1971), a Black American incarcerated for one year to life at age 18 for a minor offense. He was never released from prison and died there at age 30, killed by a prison guard. George Jackson is an emblematic figure in prisoners' struggle against the penitentiary system and racism. To read his work: George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, Lawrence Hill Books; and George Jackson, *Blood in My Eye*, Black Classic Press.

person. The inspectors already know the answers and don't need you to confirm them. The goal of this strategy is to get you to say "yes" to questions that really have only one right answer. By responding in the affirmative to apparently insignificant things, you unconsciously set yourself up to say "yes" to much more significant ones.

In the sales world, this technique is often used for telemarketing and street selling. The theory is that a vendor has an easier time selling their product if they've already gotten their target to say "yes" three times. This tactic is meant to encourage the interrogated person to adopt a cooperative attitude.

To avoid being swayed by this strategy, it's best to arrive with and stick to a mindset of non-collaboration with the police officers leading the interrogation. The easiest way to do this is to answer the first question with, "I claim my right to silence," and repeat it in response to each subsequent question.

## Humanizing the relationship and the life reserver tactic



[Simulation]

You've been locked up for hours or days in a cold, uncomfortable cell. You're stressed out, under pressure, uncertain about your future and worried about your loved ones. The police officers in contact with you are cold, aggressive and hostile. Loneliness and the lack of human contact are weighing on you. Suddenly, a police officer smiles at you, speaks to you kindly, acts understanding, reassures you about your situation and may even offer you "favors" that you've so far been denied (a glass of water, food, a phone call, a book to read). Then, just as suddenly, the same officer starts asking you uncomfortable questions. When you refuse to answer them, she acts personally disappointed and blames you. "After everything I've done for you! I thought you were sincere." If you continue to be uncooperative, the favors and her kindness will disappear as soon as they appeared.

When you're in custody or pre-trial detention, your only social contact is with the inspectors interrogating you and the police officers guarding your cell. This situation is exploited via the "life preserver" tactic. When you're in a hostile environment and someone holds out their hand to you and shows you kindness, it's hard to not feel that you owe them something. This sentiment will be used against you for emotional blackmailing. The police officer in question will act deeply disappointed, especially after having shown personal and emotional implication, hoping to increase the feelings of guilt harbored by the person refusing to cooperate.

Depending on your socioemotional profile, this strategy can be very disconcerting and destabilizing. The fear of disappointing the only person who has shown you a bit of humanity in the past few days and the sense of owing them something for these "favors" nudge you to do what the police want you to: confess and collaborate with the interrogation. In situations like this, you have to remember the asymmetric nature of the power dynamic. After taking your freedom away from you and locking you up in a concrete room, isolated from the outside world, the police are trying to emotionally blackmail you with a glass of water or a cigarette. Don't forget that the investigator who seems so kind to you isn't doing this without reason or out of pure humanity. They are behaving this way because it's part of a manipulation strategy targeting you.

## *Stockholm Syndrome*

The term “Stockholm syndrome” arose in the field of psychology in reference to a 1973 bank robbery in Stockholm in which hostages were taken. After six days of being held captive, the hostages paradoxically demonstrated a strong sense of solidarity with the robbers. The hostages protected the robbers with their own bodies when the police raided the site. They refused to give their testimony during the trial, spoke in defense of the robbers, collected money to pay the robbers’ legal fees and went to visit them in prison<sup>9</sup>.

In psychology, “Stockholm syndrome” refers to a phenomenon wherein kidnapping victims feel a paradoxical attachment to their aggressors. They lose the ability to assess the situation objectively and identify with the person or people oppressing them. Their gratitude for not being treated worse overcomes their negative feelings about being held hostage. Stockholm syndrome can be seen as an unconscious survival mechanism: the victim may feel that they escape some danger by appealing to the sympathy of the aggressor, or even that they can wield some influence over the aggressor’s emotions.

Police manipulation strategies and techniques founded on the humanization of the police-detainee relationship and emotional contagion seek to create this phenomenon. When you feel grateful toward a police officer for bringing you water even though this same officer is keeping you locked up (and depriving you of water), this is a type of Stockholm syndrome.

---

<sup>9</sup> The fact that the hostages didn’t just feel attached to and identify with their kidnappers, but were also hostile to the police about their involvement in the case, has only been analyzed in a handful of psychological studies. Nevertheless, it’s a compelling case study.

## Emotional contagion

---



[Simulation]

You are sitting in an uncomfortable chair and listening to a police officer talk about the collateral damage of your actions, including the dismay and distress of the people who found their windows broken. Guilt, shame and doubt rise in your throat. What if what the officer is saying is true? You didn't mean to hurt people when you threw a rock at the butcher shop's window. You just wanted to protest against animal suffering. The inspector's tone takes on an edge. You are accused of cowardliness, of not standing up for your beliefs, of being a mindless follower. Now you start to get angry and upset. You want to justify your actions, explain yourself and defend yourself. But you manage to keep your mouth shut. The other police officer present steps in menacingly and threatens you. "You're going to pay for this. Your family won't understand. You might even lose your job. If you refuse to talk, you'll stay in this cell for another week." Their words fan the flames of fear in your heart. You're scared and emotionally overwhelmed. Tears slide down your face while you begin answering their questions.

Moving from one emotion to another leads to emotional exhaustion. This police strategy consists of influencing your emotions through investigators' behavior. In psychology, this is called emotional contagion. The emotional state of the person in front of us influences our own emotions. Meeting an aggressive person can make us angry, afraid or stressed while meeting a quiet and gentle person can make us feel calm (and maybe also distrustful). This tactic can be used to influence an interrogated person's emotional state through the different interrogators and their behavior.

The police officers will try to determine which emotional state makes you the most vulnerable and likely to lose your cool. Will shame and guilt motivate you to redeem yourself and confess? Will it be anger that finally shatters your cool? Or will it be fear pushing you to speak up? The study of your behavior when you're being arrested and detained as well as your interactions with the police officers will give them useful information to answer these questions with.

Emotional contagion can occur through verbal and nonverbal communication. An open, friendly and almost happy inspector (smiling, arms open) will influence you differently than one who is distant and hostile (arms crossed, eyes averted).



[Cop speaking]

*"Real anger is pretty rare. Typically, it's fake anger. It's just a front. It's all a performance. They're bluffing. It makes you get angry, raise your voice, yell and even attack them."*

## Naïve cops

---



[Simulation]

When the inspector starts the interrogation, you think to yourself that they must not have much experience. Their questions seem irrelevant and off-topic. The officer has no idea what they're doing—they're not just a beginner, they're totally incompetent. This reassures you and gives you the impression that you'll make it out of here okay. You try lying. Then again. In your wild optimism, you accidentally let slip a piece of information that you shouldn't have. The inspector's attitude changes. They point out a contradiction in your lies and indicate that they can prove that you're not telling the truth. The questions get very specific and target sensitive subjects. From the look on their face, you understand that you've been played for a fool. You were allowed to gain confidence in yourself so you would make mistakes.

The “naive cop” strategy is used at the beginning of an interrogation, during your first contact with the police. It’s typically a young police officer who will be chosen to perform it, someone who will act bumbling and incompetent and even flat-out stupid. The objective of this strategy is to increase your self-confidence so that you lower your guard and make mistakes. You might, for example, give up an important piece of information by underestimating the inspectors’ ability to use it against you. Or lie confidently because you think these newbie investigators will never figure you out.

This strategy lures you into a false sense of security, followed (potentially) by a nasty shock when you realize that the police officers have just been toying with you, you didn’t evaluate the situation correctly and you’ve put yourself in danger. That can suddenly tip your view of things upside down. You thought you had the upper hand over the inspector due to their obvious naivety, but in fact you’ve been tricked.



[Copspeaking]

*It’s good to be able to act authoritative as a police officer. You can really play around with it. You can act authoritative and stupid at the same time, and then switch to seeming open and kind during the next conversation. It’s destabilizing and helps break down people’s defenses.*

## Synchronized interviews

---



[Simulation]

You and your friends were all arrested at the same time, three days after you all dismantled the statue of a slave owner (who nevertheless remains celebrated by society). The police clearly suspect that it was you. Fortunately, you all agreed on the story you would tell if you were arrested. During the interrogation, you answer the questions by telling the story you prepared. A little while later, the police officers come back and inform you that there were slight differences between your story and those of your friends. You answer by trying to stick the pieces together. But you're unsettled. How can you ensure that you're saying the same things as your friends? Still later, during the third interrogation, the police officers' questions lead you to understand that your stories were more than slightly different—you contradicted each other and now they suspect that someone is lying. You realize too late that your friends underwent exactly the same interrogation as you, with the same questions in the same order, and that the inspectors managed to transform an initial minor difference in the same story into two conflicting accounts.

Synchronized interviews are used specifically when the police need to question more than one person about the same event. This strategy enables the police to determine whether the suspects have fabricated a story in advance in order to hide the truth. In this case, you and your friends will undergo separate but identical interrogations. The questions will be asked in the same way and in the same order to elicit the same interpretation. It'll be easy to spot the points of divergence, the little details you didn't think of, and the questions you didn't anticipate that leave you at a loss for words.

After comparing the different versions, a second round of identical interrogations is conducted simultaneously with all of the

interrogated people without giving you the opportunity to speak to each other. This makes it easy for the police to dig into the inconsistencies in your statements until your story loses credibility and is exposed as a version prepared in advance.

If several people's statements are too similar, that can be just as suspect as statements that don't match up. Two people who have experienced the same thing will recount it from their own point of view, affected by their own emotions and interests. The result will be noticeably less similar than if the two people had memorized the same alibi.

## Pointing out changes in behavior

---



[Simulation]

The interrogation started with open-ended questions on unimportant subjects. To give off the impression of innocence, you've decided to answer them. Then, the investigator asks you a question about something that makes you uncomfortable. While hiding your discomfort, you give a response that skirts the subject. The questions become less threatening for a while and then the inspector asks you a series of specific questions on the aforementioned subject that you'd prefer to avoid. You try to skirt around it again but this time the police officers let you know that they've noticed how your behavior changes each time they touch on this subject and that they can tell that you're trying to hide something. Your face heats up. You hesitate, stammer, and finally say that you don't want to answer that question. "Okay, that's your right," they say, "but you should know that in court, that'll be taken for evidence of guilt. Otherwise, why answer the previous questions and stop here? You're hiding something and we know it. If you confess, you'll get this weight off your chest and it'll save everyone some time."

During an interrogation, the inspectors pay as much attention to your body language as to what you say. It gives them a lot of clues to what might be a sensitive subject for you, since you may become nervous and stressed. By pointing out the way your behavior changes, for example when they bring up people suspected of being your accomplices, the police officers hope to give you the impression that your body is betraying you and that your words are no longer credible. Why do you seem agitated when answering a given question when right before it you were calm and relaxed?

The goal is to knock you off-balance, make you doubt yourself and your ability to hide things from the police, and give you the impression that it's already over for you.

Refusing to answer any of their questions protects you well against this strategy. Without being able to compare your responses and reactions to different questions, they can't use any supposed behavioral changes against you ["9. Nonverbal communication", page 86].

## Minimizing and maximizing

---



[Simulation]

From the moment you were taken into detention, you've been worrying about the potential consequences of a conviction. Will you have to pay a big fine? Or go to prison? If you do, for how long? What conditions will you be incarcerated in? Will your loved ones understand? What about your employer? You'll unconsciously focus on the worst possibilities and you'll wonder how you'll survive several months in prison along with social rejection. Your stress and anxiety threaten to boil over. However, during the interrogation, you're relieved to hear the inspectors say that you only risk a fine, that they did worse things at your age, that what you're accused of is illegal but not that big of a deal, that "drug dealers are the real criminals" and your actions in comparison "aren't that bad." You relax when you hear this and you feel the pressure dropping. After fearing the worst, the prospect of a mere fine to pay seems less serious. It's almost a blessing. You feel less defensive, lower your guard and answer their questions until they take you into a cell. Doubt settles over you. What if they lied?

The police list three fears that can prevent interrogated people from confessing:

- 🔥 fear of legal consequences and a potential conviction
- 🔥 fear of social shunning, rejection by family and friends, losing one's job
- 🔥 fear of one's own feeling of guilt and shame, having betrayed one's own morals. This can prevent a person from acknowledging what they have done and consequently from confessing it to someone else

By minimizing the events that occurred, the potential reactions from loved ones and the gravity of the situation, the inspectors seek to soothe your fears and reassure you so you are less hesitant to confess. The idea is for you to acknowledge to yourself what you've done and then of course confess to the police officers. They might tell you that the legal consequences aren't very serious or act understanding about what you did and especially your reasons for doing it. They'll also reassure you that your loved ones will understand what you did and forgive you. They'll compare your actions to "serious" crimes while telling you, "you could've done something much worse."

---

***It's perfectly normal and legitimate to be afraid and make space for your fear.***

---

However, it's particularly dangerous (and unhelpful) to face your demons in the context of an interrogation where police officers are trying to exploit your weaknesses to manipulate you.

With regard to the legal consequences, your lawyer or a support group for legal affairs will have better advice. Don't forget that between your visit to the police station and your trial, you'll have plenty of time to read up on the possible outcomes of a sentence. And, you'll have access to your investigation file.

As for your loved ones' reactions, who would know better than you how they might react to your sentencing? Certainly not police officers fixated on their role as protectors of moral order. Taking the time to talk with your loved ones in advance about the meaning of concepts like "guilty/innocent" and "legal/illegal," as well as the way the criminal justice system works and the meaning we ascribe to our choices in life, even when they are illegal, can help to lay the groundwork for mutual understanding.

Maybe you feel guilty and regret the actions that have now led the police to investigate you. We all make mistakes and do things that we later regret. Acknowledging accountability for our actions can help us to change and improve our empathy and honesty.

Institutional justice doesn't aim to repair the damage done or transform suffering into a liberating experience. Its purpose is to punish people who have broken laws. Authoritarian, bureaucratic institutions don't provide conditions favorable to a restorative approach. The reparation of a harm done is much more likely to be successful when approached with the people involved and affected by the sequence of events, whether in individual interactions or within the community [see the chapter "Going beyond the police" "Going beyond the police," page 135].

This strategy can also be used in the opposite way to exaggerate the gravity of the situation and play on people's natural tendency to acknowledge a less serious infraction than the one initially presented.



*"You tell him that he's in over his head. [The suspect] thinks that it's just a matter of civil law, but he wasn't aware that the phones he stole were used for terrorist purposes. [So I tell him] either you tell me how you stole these, why, and with whom, or you'll be implicated in terrorism. You decide. You use that to push his buttons and get information, by putting psychological pressure on him."*

## Blamin someone else

---



[Simulation]

When you arrive in the interrogation room, already worried, the investigators are very understanding about your situation. They mention the accomplices who might have put pressure on you so you would help them grow marijuana. Maybe they bear more responsibility for what happened. The investigators say that the law is inappropriate because in other countries, marijuana cultivation is already legal. They say that society still hasn't grasped that cannabis isn't any more dangerous than alcohol. They smoked weed when they were teenagers too. They say that at least you weren't dealing heroin, because "that's the really nasty stuff." Their words bolster your growing sense of hope. The ambiance in the room seems less hostile. You feel that they understand that your share of moral responsibility in this affair amounts to little. A tiny feeling of gratitude blooms inside you for the police officers who have helped you feel less guilty. You sense that things are looking up, so you open up and acknowledge the actions that you are accused of.

The purpose of blaming someone or something else (the laws, your accomplices, or even the victims if the police officers are really cynical) is to guide the interrogated person to disavow responsibility for their actions. If you're not really the one responsible, it seems less crucial to deny the accusations. The investigators make you think that since you're not fully responsible for your actions, you'll benefit from mitigating circumstances during your trial. I'd like to remind you here that the police's job is solely to build a case file with elements that could help convict you in court. Everything to do with the potential sentence (type, length, clemency, mitigating circumstances) is beyond their power to affect. The judge is the one who will make these decisions.

In an investigation targeting several people, one common strategy is to make you think that it's the others' fault that the police are investigating you. One of the other accomplices hasn't been careful enough and has let something slip, or has snitched on you during their interrogation. The point emphasized is that it's not your responsibility to pay for a mistake made by someone else. This strategy encourages you to abandon solidarity with your accomplices and give info to the police.

Similarly, the police might present you with a version of the facts in which your associates dragged you into the affair more or less against your will, saying that you are less responsible for what happened than the others (which may lead you to think that your sentence will be lighter). The quid pro quo in this situation is that you have to answer their questions. Because if you only participated in these illegal actions due to pressure, why would you want to protect the people who forced your hand?

## Encouraging confession

---



[Simulation]

Since your arrest, you've been submerged in doubt and guilt when thinking of your actions. Maybe you acted too quickly and recklessly. Now you regret it. Ideally, you'd be able to encounter the people affected by your actions and apologize to them. Then, you'd all figure out how to repair the harm done. However, the criminal justice system has already intervened and reparation is not a possible outcome—only punishment. What will your friends and family think? What kind of image will people have of you? You want to explain yourself and why you did what you did. Unfortunately, you're cut off from the world. In front of you are only the usual police officers. They're trying to emphasize your feelings of guilt while pretending to be understanding about your situation. They say that they're aware that you're going through a difficult time and they

reassure you that it'll be over soon. If you confess, you'll demonstrate repentance. Your loved ones will understand that you regret what happened and you'll feel relieved to be on track for redemption. The best thing to do is confess.

It's the most basic interrogation strategy. After emphasizing your feelings of guilt and remorse, the inspectors will present confession as a first step toward redemption. They'll tell you how relieved you'll feel after confessing, taking inspiration from the practice of religious confession. Your religious beliefs, moral principles and concept of good and evil will be leveraged to find instances where your actions didn't line up with your beliefs and push you into the role of a sinner seeking forgiveness. In this situation, the police officers might say things like, "it'll be a weight off your mind," or "cough it up already, it'll do you good."

Another argument they might use is that "the sooner you acknowledge your actions, the sooner this will all be behind you." In reality, the inverse is more likely to be true. How many interpersonal conflicts would have been resolved long ago without the slow, burdensome processes of the criminal justice system?

## **Flatter and mock**

---

"It makes sense that an idiot like yourself would get caught so quickly."

"You must be totally oblivious and naive to think that a plan like that could be pulled off."

"In my fifteen-year career, I've never seen that before."

"An idea like that is really audacious."

"You prepared your plan very shrewdly and with foresight, which we don't see very often."

Flattery, like mockery (examples above) are powerful emotional tools that attack one's pride, ego and vanity. The inspectors may mock the ineptness of the interrogated person and the mistakes they made in order to push the person to justify their actions and correct their negative image. On the flip side, flattery may be used in the

hopes that the interrogated person will acknowledge or claim responsibility for actions presented as especially daring or clever. This strategy of flattering/insulting may take place over a long stretch of time through subtle insinuations planted by the police in interactions during and outside of the interrogation room. This strategy is often used against people deemed to be narcissistic, feel overconfident/underconfident, or have a sense of superiority over others.

To protect yourself, you can't let yourself get baited into emotional warfare with the police officers provoking you. It doesn't matter what they think of you or the situation. You have nothing to prove to them. They're strangers who are only appearing briefly in your life and that with hostile intentions. Being honest with yourself and clear on your choices in life, legal or not, helps you protect yourself from ego-based attacks.

### **Speculating about the investigation's resources**

You arrive for your interrogation feeling sure of yourself. This isn't your first rodeo. The officers who arrested you couldn't possibly have anything in their possession that would prove your guilt. You're a suspect, that's for sure, but fortunately suspicion isn't enough grounds for conviction. All you have to do is keep your mouth shut and you'll be fine. The police officers soon notice your apparent confidence and lack of worry about the risks you might be running. And yet, they start to act confident too. They say that it's not important whether you spill the beans or not. Don't you know that you were recorded by surveillance cameras and that they have the videos? You don't think you saw any cameras, but maybe you were mistaken. Maybe you didn't look closely enough. The police officers say that they'll soon have the results from the fingerprint, footprint and DNA tests. Your face gets hot and your confidence turns to doubt:



[Simulation]

you had gloves and you threw away your shoes afterward, but what about the DNA? How do they get DNA traces, anyway? Did you protect yourself enough? The police continue. They say that several people responded to the call for witnesses over the radio and that your phone records seem promising as well. Oh no, your phone! You hadn't thought about that. Did you remember to delete everything? Didn't someone once tell you that it was possible to recover deleted files?

You're no longer feeling very self-assured. What if they find out everything? You're strongly tempted to confess it all and cooperate with the police. That way, you can demonstrate repentance and maybe earn a bit of leniency at the trial.

As I've already mentioned, you (as the interrogated person) don't have access to the investigation case file and therefore you don't know what's in it. Furthermore, unless you've already been in this kind of situation, you probably don't have a clear and complete understanding of the police's resources nor of the legal framework structuring their operations. Basically, you don't know what the police officers know, and you don't know what capacities they have to do their work. Your ignorance is fully exploited. The inspectors want you to believe that they can do anything—that they have unlimited means, resources and time, that they have a wealth of material evidence or that they will definitely find some. Their goal is to guide you into one of the following mindsets:

- 🔥 Resignation: "I'm done for, the police know everything already, it doesn't make a difference whether I talk or not, so why bother resisting?"
- 🔥 Justification: "Whatever I say (or withhold) doesn't matter because the police have already settled on the story. They're interrogating me just as a formality." This mindset can give you the urge to justify your actions and explain what happened. If you do this, you'll give them more information than they already have.

## 7. Types of questions

There are many ways to formulate the same question. The inspector will phrase their questions differently depending on their strategy and what information they want to communicate to you. This section lists the main question types.

### Open-ended questions

---

Open-ended questions address a topic in a very general way. They elicit a natural flow of information by encouraging free expression and discussion instead of specific, limited responses. Inspectors use them to give the impression that they're truly interested in the topic as well as to move away from a confrontational set-up. Open-ended questions encourage the interrogated person to collaborate actively.

During an interrogation, this type of question is often used at the beginning. Your responses give the investigator an idea of who you are and how you think. What's more, open-ended questions set the scene for future questions that will be much more specific.

This type of question is often used for the funnel strategy.

Examples:

- What do you think about this situation?
- What can you tell me about this topic?
- Do you like your job? Movies? Sports?
- What does your typical daily routine look like?

## **Closed-ended questions**

These are questions seeking precise and specific answers. They direct the interrogation toward a certain point. They often have short answers like yes or no. When they're dropped suddenly in the middle of a flurry of open-ended questions, closed-ended questions can surprise you, throw you off-kilter and put pressure on you. In the "good cop, bad cop" strategy, this is the kind of question that the bad cop tends to use [page 51]. This kind of question is also used to make you say yes and trigger unconscious acceptance [page 64].

Examples:

- Who gave you that money?
- Did you see X yesterday?
- Did you go to Paris last week?

## **Speculative questions**

These are used to make you think that the police officers already know some of the answer, or at least make you wonder how much they know. These questions are frequently phrased with two possible answers using "or." They clearly influence the expected answer, which makes them good tools for getting the conversation back on track.

Examples:

- Did you see Mr. Bertrand before or after he left?
- Is there a reason why a neighbor would have said that your car was parked near the site where the incident took place?

## **Test questions**

---

Sometimes, to guide their next steps, the investigators need to know if you intend to defend yourself through lying. They'll ask you a test question to determine this. It'll be a question that they know the answer to, but you don't know that they know. It's hard to tell when you're being asked a test question. The quicksand strategy [[page 55]] commonly starts with a test question.

Examples:

- Where were you last night?
- On what date did you move into your apartment?
- Why didn't you go to work yesterday?

## **Insinuating questions**

---

Insinuating questions have a clear bias. They are used to make you uncomfortable and defensive. It's as if the police officers already know what happened, but they want to make you say it in your own words. They might be trying to get a confession out of you, goad you into emotional investment [page 55] or get you to yield more information as you seek to justify your actions and defend yourself against the insinuations [page 71]. The questions may be followed by warnings like, "Think carefully before you speak!" or "Are you sure?"

Examples:

- Why did you lie to us by saying that you left your home last night?
- Was it you who sent this letter?
- Was it your associate who did that to you?

## **Projection questions**

---

When the police try to create a connection between you and them, lean on your feelings of guilt and shame, or make you distance yourself from the current situation, projection questions may be used. These questions are especially effective for bringing an interrogated person onto the neutral ground of the conditional tense. "If you needed money, would you take some from your employer's cash register?" is easier to answer in the affirmative than a question phrased more directly: "Did you steal from your employer's cash register?"

Examples:

- If you were in our shoes, what would you think?
- Why do you think that the culprit would have acted that way?
- How would you feel if people illegally entered your home?

## **Rebound questions**

---

These are short questions that inspectors ask to get at previously mentioned information that seems important, in order to redirect the discussion to their favor. They're also used to give the impression of understanding, empathy and interest in you.

Examples:

- What color was this car? (when you've just mentioned a car)
- And what sport DO you like? (after you say that you don't like tennis)
- What do you mean? Tell me more about that.

## **Mirroring questions**

---

Mirroring questions are frequently used in psychotherapy. They nudge the patient (or interrogated person) to elaborate on their previous statements. These questions reformulate the last response given. They're used in the emotional investment strategy [page 55] and to create a connection between the investigator(s) and the suspect [page 58].

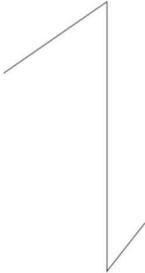
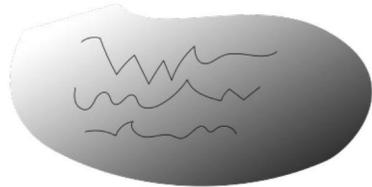
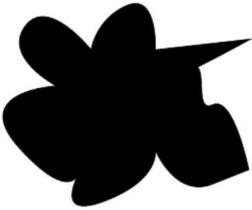
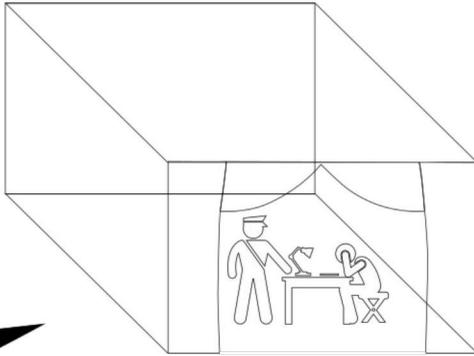
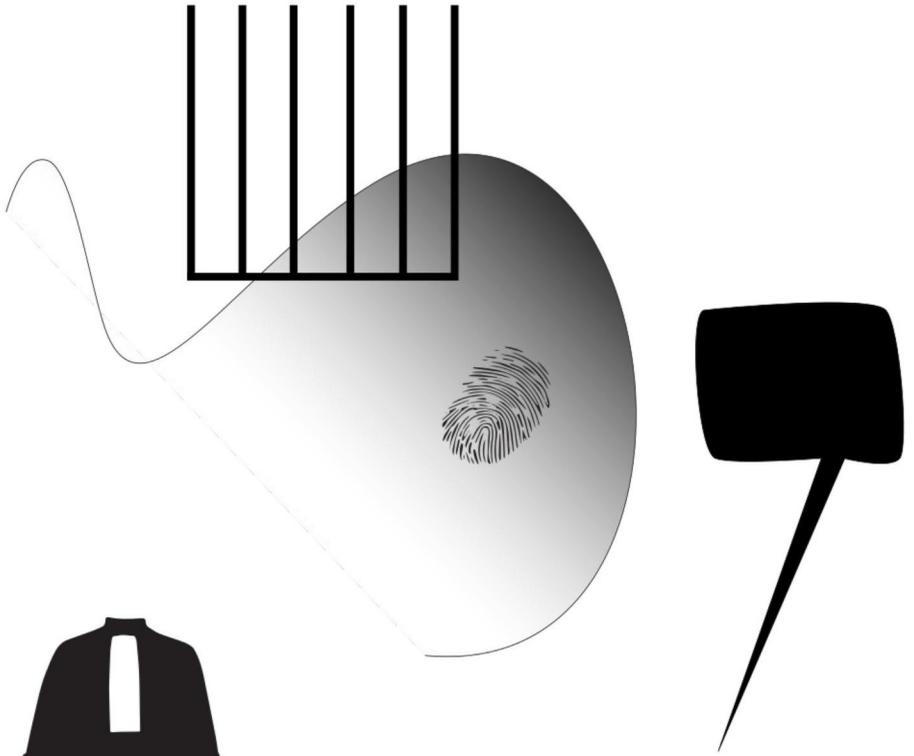
Exemples:

- You said that you didn't feel respected by your employer?
- You felt uncomfortable around your friend? (after the interrogated person said that they felt uncomfortable around their friend)

---

***Manipulation techniques, interrogation strategies, different question types: all of these are puzzle pieces that the police can combine in a thousand ways to achieve their goals, based on the situation and the person they're addressing.***

---



# **Around** the interrogation

*This chapter examines elements that have a direct influence on the interrogation.*

## 8. The interrogation report

The police write up a report for each interrogation. This document will be added to the investigation file as a record of the content of the interrogation(s). The interactions between the police officers and the interrogated person are noted down in real time and written up fully later. When the interrogation is led by two investigators, one takes notes while the other asks most of the questions.

The investigation report records the duration of the interrogation, the questions and answers, statements by the lawyer, nonverbal communication (stammering, tenseness, silence, nodding) and the attitude of the interrogated person (stressed, crying, emotional).

At the end of the interrogation, a printout of the report is given to the interrogated person for correction. If an interpreter is present, the report will be orally translated. The police then have the document signed (either page by page or just once at the end, depending on the country) by all of the people present (inspectors, lawyer, suspect, interpreters).

---

***Signing the interrogation report means validating the report and ALL of its content.***

---

Personally, I see no reason to sign this document and I don't recommend doing so. If you didn't say anything during the interrogation, then you have nothing to gain by signing it. By refusing, you stick to your strategy of refusing to collaborate. If there's a trial, it makes no difference whether you've signed a blank report.

If you were trapped by one of the police interrogation strategies and you did say something, you dig yourself a deeper hole by signing

the report. This means that you confirm what you said and it makes it even more difficult to take it back later. You can only contest the contents of the report later if you've refused to sign it.

Your refusal to collaborate with the police (by yielding information or signing the report) puts you in the best possible position to think about your defense strategy for the upcoming trial, without having penalized yourself in advance. This is a general rule for any and all interactions with law enforcement: the least risky path consists of refusing to collaborate and refusing to do what the police want. Every step you take toward the police increases the danger you expose yourself to and gives you no advantage in return.



[Copspeaking]

*"The way in which we hear out the suspect puts pressure on them. If we don't represent their words faithfully, we put pressure on them: will they have the balls to look the police officer in the eye and say, 'hey, what you wrote here isn't what I said'? It takes courage to confront a police officer, an authority figure who knows what they're doing."*

## 9. Nonverbal communication

When we communicate verbally, our bodies react to the emotions that arise depending on the topic discussed. This is reflected through facial expressions, attitudes, gestures, gaze, tone and the speed of our speech. This is what we call nonverbal communication. The fact that you're twisting your pen in your hands or crossing your arms won't necessarily be interpreted to mean that you're lying, but it could indicate a sensitive topic.

During an interrogation, there is a strong emotional imbalance between you and the inspectors. For them, it's a mundane, routine part of their days on the job. They have a lot of experience with this type of situation due to their training and practice. Even if you've been interrogated before, your emotions are bound to be more intense than those of the police officers. Your heart beats faster, you breathe faster, your focus sharpens and you're more alert. The stakes aren't the same for you as they are for people who are just doing their job, since your future may be affected by the way this session plays out.

It's possible to learn to control some of the ways in which our body betrays our emotional state. Nevertheless, it's an arduous exercise that demands a level of concentration and self-control that is difficult to maintain while being interrogated. While you're being detained, the police have many ways to weaken you physically and psychologically: disrupting your sleep, intimidating you, isolating you, depriving you of food, etc.

The officers pay attention to your body language as well as any attempts to stifle your nonverbal communication. When ideas and feelings form in the brain, the body communicates the emotions related to them faster than verbal phrases can be put together. If a person shows sadness through body language a beat too late after speaking about the sad thing, it's very likely that the emotion is being faked.

Some inspectors may try to influence you with their own body language. For example, when using the strategy of emotional contagion [page 61], in which the police officers try to elicit a specific emotion in you through their own expression of emotion. In this case, an inspector who wants to seem angry will adopt the appropriate nonverbal behavior to make you think that they truly are angry (raising their voice, speaking faster, clenching their fists, turning red, etc.).

Below is a list of the main elements of nonverbal communication that the police pay attention to in order to glean information about your emotional state<sup>10</sup>.

- 🔥 **Hands:** clenched, scratching at something, micro-gestures, trembling
- 🔥 **Speech:** tone of voice, volume, pace, intonation, stuttering, coughing, throat-clearing, swallowing, having a dry mouth, laughing
- 🔥 **Body:** muscle tenseness, trembling, flushing, sweating
- 🔥 **Breathing:** sighing, speaking faster/slower, staccato breaths, deep/shallow breaths
- 🔥 **Gaze:** presence or absence of eye contact, nuance, tears, gaze direction
- 🔥 **Heart rate**

---

<sup>10</sup> This list (freely translated) comes from the book *Telling lies* by Paul Ekman, W. W. Norton & Company. I recommend that anyone seeking to better control their nonverbal communication read this book.

## 10. Interpreters

If the interrogated person doesn't speak the official language(s) of the country, the police officers will bring in an interpreter. In countries like Switzerland or Belgium, which have several official languages, you can request that the interrogation be conducted in your native language (if it's one of the official languages) even if you're in a part of the country where another language dominates.

Although they aren't part of the police force, the interpreters aren't your friends or allies either. They're what the police call "external collaborators." In a hostile environment, you may find yourself harboring a feeling of closeness for a person who isn't on the police force and who speaks your native language. However, the interpreters you'll be dealing with have been chosen and approved by the police and regularly collaborate with them. Be careful not to recreate the "life preserver" tactic with the interpreter present. If you share a similar background with the interpreter, the inspectors may ask them for cultural and political background information on you.

---

***Many interrogation strategies require the police to have direct contact with you.***

---

The advantage of the interpreter's presence is that they serve as a buffer between the interrogated person and the inspectors. To minimize this buffer effect, the interpreter is often seated behind the investigators, who look at you and speak to you directly. Nevertheless, in their own writings, police officers are aware that strategies such as the recency effect [page 45] and the

humanization of the police-suspect relationship are more difficult to set up [page 58].

With or without an interpreter, silence remains your best defense when faced with the police. The presence of an interpreter can also be positive for you. It enables you to understand the police's questions as well as the context you find yourself in, and it penalizes the police officers. Their efforts to manipulate you through precise word use, sentence construction and intonation will not be transmitted identically through the interpreter.

# 11. Lawyers

The point at which you can be put in contact with a lawyer varies depending on the country and the police's practices. In some places like Switzerland, you can ask for a lawyer as soon as you have contact with the police. In others, you can only make this request once you're in pre-trial detention and an investigation has been officially opened against you.

Sometimes, when you ask to speak with a lawyer, the police try to dissuade you by saying that this can take time and you'll have to stay locked up until then, whereas if you agree to proceed without a lawyer, the affair will soon be over.

Ideally, you should already be in touch with a lawyer whom you know and who is ready to defend you. If this isn't the case, you'll be put in touch with a court-appointed attorney. You may also feel that you don't need to have a lawyer present during the interrogation(s) and that you'll wait until the trial.

Whatever the situation is, the presence of a lawyer is often a welcome buffer between you and the police, especially their more aggressive strategies. The "good cop, bad cop" tactic [page 51] won't have the same emotional impact with the reassuring figure of your lawyer present. To weaken your sense of protection, the lawyer is often placed behind you. Furthermore, the police officers will be much less willing to speculate about the means of evidence or the sentences you risk receiving if the attorney is present with all of their legal knowledge, able to contradict and discredit them [page 67].

The presence of a lawyer can also induce certain dangers. There are good as well as bad attorneys. They may be the only person at your side throughout the legal process. They're supposed to represent you, defend you and take your side. This expectation can create a "life preserver" effect [page 58] that may turn against you if your lawyer gives bad advice. Sometimes, a lawyer may advise you to answer some of the police's questions or give statements about your accomplices to shed some of your perceived responsibility. The lawyer has no authority during an interrogation, though, and isn't a

bulwark against the police officers. You won't be able to escape their traps by hiding behind the attorney. If you make mistakes by getting caught up in the question-and-response dynamic, your lawyer won't be able to save you. Their statements, like yours, will be recorded in the interrogation report.

On the other hand, having a good attorney at your side can come with a slew of advantages for the legal process:

- 🔥 non-hostile human presence
- 🔥 potential connection with your loved ones on the outside
- 🔥 influence on the conditions of your detention (they may argue for you to be able to make calls or receive/send mail, etc.)
- 🔥 assistance with the administrative paperwork related to detention (by submitting requests for release before the trial, appeals against the decision to detain you, requests for evidence, requests for witnesses, requests to access the investigation file, etc.)
- 🔥 help with your preparation for the trial and defense strategies



*"In most cases, an attorney's worst enemy is his own client. Often, the lawyer leans a little bit in our direction. Or if he gives the client good advice, he tells them that it's better to give some statements rather than making things up."*

## 12. Witness hearings

Witness hearings have the particularity of being part of another legal framework. During an interrogation, you are called upon as a defendant to make statements on an affair concerning you. Not only is it reasonable to remain silent, you have the legal right to do so.

As a witness, you're only called upon to make declarations relevant to someone else and about an affair that you're not directly involved in, or at least one that you're not a suspect in. However, in most countries, you have a legal obligation to give a statement. If you refuse or if it can be proved that you're lying, you typically risk a fine. In some serious cases, you could be charged with aiding and abetting. Sometimes, investigations are opened against witnesses after they give their statements in front of the police or in court, when information they yield is used against them.

Here too, it's dangerous to try to lie. It could come back to bite you. The law does forbid you to refuse to reply—but no law requires you to remember what happened and no one has control over your memory. The answer "I don't remember anymore" is a good excuse that doesn't put you in danger or reveal information that could serve to convict someone else.

## 13. Police custody and pre-trial detention



*"A guy who's obnoxious, acts like a jerk and doesn't make things easy for you won't be trapped. But I don't have to trap him—that's the difference. On the other hand, a cooperative guy WILL get trapped."*

An interrogation can be conducted upon a written summons from the police. Or, you might already be in custody when you're called in for an interrogation.

There are two types of detention situations.

First, police custody. This is when you're detained in the police station for a few hours or days (depending on the country's laws). When you're arrested in flagrante delicto or at a protest, you'll be taken into custody.

---

***As a general rule, the police keeps you in custody until they've interrogated you once or several times, in order to clarify the situation and the direction that the investigation will take.***

---

You may be held in custody for a longer time if the police want to increase the pressure or destabilize you to make you more vulnerable during interrogation. Your time in custody ends either when the police officers let you go, or when a prosecutor (or judge, depending

on the legal framework of the country) decide that you should be held in preventive detention until the trial. The investigation continues after your time in police custody. You might receive a summons for another interrogation.

**Pre-trial detention:** When a prosecutor or judge decides that you shouldn't be released before your trial, you're placed into pre-trial or preventive detention. The justification for prolonging your detainment is to prevent you from fleeing your sentencing, contacting the other accused parties, getting rid of evidence and interfering with the ongoing investigation. Pre-trial detention takes place in a prison rather than in the police station. You will spend a longer time in preventive detention than in police custody. In this situation as well, the duration and conditions of your detainment will be used to put pressure on you and break down your resistance to interrogation. During your detention, the investigation continues. You may be interrogated several times before the trial. Once the investigation is over, you can access your investigation file so you can prepare for the trial, while still in prison, with assistance from your lawyer (if you have one). You may be set free from pre-trial detention at your trial or beforehand. Should you be convicted, the time you've already spent in detention will count toward your sentence, and should you be acquitted, you may be entitled to compensation.

---

## ***Several interrogation strategies focus on the vulnerability induced by a loss of freedom.***

---

In these two situations, you're locked up in a cell before and after the interrogations. Strangers in uniforms come get you and take you to the office where the interrogation will take place. It's important to understand that this confinement is part of the interrogations and the ongoing investigation. Several interrogation strategies focus on the vulnerability induced by a loss of freedom. One of the goals of confinement is to weaken you physically and psychologically, to strip away your resources and reduce your ability to defend yourself

during interrogation. I present here a brief overview of the different mechanisms at play.

**Loss of control over your schedule:** From the moment you're taken into police custody, you no longer have control over your time. Meals, interrogations and time outside are scheduled without regard for your feelings on the matter. Some cells, especially those used for police custody, don't have toilets in them and the light is turned on and off from the outside, which reduces your decision-making power and autonomy even further. Whether you're sleeping, reading, writing or working out, you can be interrupted at any moment. This can make you feel robbed of agency in your own life. If this feeling of powerlessness persists, it will weaken your resistance to the inspectors during interrogation.

**Isolation:** The solitude and social isolation that result from a period of imprisonment can also be very disconcerting. When you're face-to-face with inspectors pretending to take an interest in you after a period with no real human contact, the temptation to engage with them is strong, if only to finally talk to someone. If the police officers notice that your isolation is getting to you, they'll try to use the life preserver tactic or humanize your relationship with them [page 58].

**Intimidation:** Hostile, aggressive or even violent guards; quibbles about primary needs (food, sanitary napkins, medicine); "administrative" blockage of your mail; and so on. The police have many ways to reinforce a power imbalance and issue threatening demands for cooperation. A tense atmosphere provides the perfect setting for the "good cop, bad cop" strategy [page 51] and for emotional contagion [page 61].

In most cases, getting arrested comes as a surprise. Being yanked out of your regular life for an indefinite period of time is usually a stressful and anxiety-inducing experience. There will certainly be appointments that you'll miss, people you can't warn who will worry about you, an employer who will have to scramble to cover for your absence, a loved one whom you won't be able to take care of anymore, and more. Getting arrested disrupts your life immediately.

The resulting anxiety and stress fill up your brain and prevent you from concentrating on the interrogation and its dangers. In addition, the possibility of being freed is often dangled in front of you as bait to get information out of you. The more stressed and uncomfortable you are, the stronger this argument will seem.

The violence inherent in the deprivation of your freedom is not insignificant. However, your detention represents a much greater danger as a means of putting pressure on you during the investigation. You risk yielding the information necessary to convict you, which could greatly prolong your imprisonment.

### *My cell?*

**“Go back to your cell” sounds a bit like “go clean your room.” But this cell isn't mine. How could it be mine? I'll never put effort into claiming a space intended to keep others locked up. If other people want to design, build and maintain such spaces, let them be the ones responsible for it. Cells, uniforms and detainee numbers will always remain the property of the prison administration. Their way of using words is meant to make me assimilate and accept the cold logic of the prison system. In the same vein, it's not “my” interrogation or “my” criminal sentence, but “the” interrogation that I'm undergoing and “the” sentence being imposed on me. I'm not part of the justice institution's processes. I'm subjected to them and I'm defending myself against them. The tools that I create and develop with the people around me to deal with conflict and ease the suffering that it causes cannot be compared to the authority exercised by the State.**

# 14. A few words on violence

*Please note that this chapter contains descriptions of practices tantamount to physical torture.*

Every police interrogation contains at least one form of psychological violence. The manipulation and pressure techniques that police use during interrogations are indissociable from a type of psychological abuse.

In many countries, the use of physical violence has been struck off the list of pressure tactics that can be legally used during police interrogations. But in others, it's still legal.

After September 11, 2001, the CIA commissioned two psychologists to develop interrogation techniques that combined psychological and physical violence. The manual they came up with was far from innovative, but was praised for its "modernity" and quickly circulated among different police forces around the world.

Here are some excerpts of these techniques<sup>11</sup>:

- 🔥 **Grabbing:** The interrogator suddenly grabs the detainee by the collar and pulls them closer to surprise, shock, intimidate and/or humiliate them.
- 🔥 **Walling:** The detainee is jerked forward, then shoved back hard against a wall.
- 🔥 **Slapping the face:** A slap can humiliate the detainee, break their concentration, and/or communicate their inferiority through an aggressive intrusion into their personal space.
- 🔥 **Immobilizing the head:** The inspector positions themself behind the detainee and holds the detainee's head still while asking them questions.
- 🔥 **Waterboarding (simulated drowning):** The interrogated

---

<sup>11</sup> For a more comprehensive list, look up the Bybee/Bradbury torture memos.

person is tied down, face up, with their head lower than their feet. Water is poured onto a cloth covering their nose and mouth to provoke an extremely realistic sensation of drowning.

- 🔥 **Sleep deprivation:** The interrogated person is deprived of sleep for several days to exhaust them and prevent them from concentrating.
- 🔥 **Confinement:** The detainee is locked up in a small space that limits their ability to move around. Depending on the person's specific phobias, the CIA psychologists may recommend putting insects into the cell. Depending on the type of confinement, the person may spend 2-18 hours there.
- 🔥 **Painful positions :** The interrogated person is forced to stay in an uncomfortable position for a long time (sitting on the floor with arms and legs stretched out, kneeling on the ground, leaning against a wall with their fingers supporting all of their body weight, etc.). While they are in these positions, they're being asked questions.
- 🔥 **Hunger/temperature:** Hunger and temperature (being locked up in a very hot or very cold room) are manipulated to weaken the detainee.
- 🔥 **Nudity:** The interrogated person is forced to undress so that they will be humiliated.

These techniques are far from the cinema cliché of an angry inspector hitting a suspect or a psychopathic Nazi with his set of scalpels. Here, physical violence is used as an intentional part of interrogation strategies in the same way as the verbal tactics presented earlier. The use of physical violence has the same aim: to destabilize, weaken, exhaust, intimidate and break down the resistance of the interrogated person so that they'll cooperate with the police officers' wishes (by confessing, giving statements, denouncing others, or collaborating in another way). These strategies are carefully prepared in advance and deployed according to the profile of the detainee.

---

## ***Police officers don't have the legal right to resort to physical violence. But that doesn't mean that they won't.***

---

Violence may be used in a precise and calculated way, or in a much less subtle way. In the rare cases when it's recognized and receives media attention, it's referred to as a "blunder" in the dominant discourse. The term "blunder" is completely inadequate to describe an illegal use of physical violence that is encouraged by police culture and protected by a criminal justice system that rarely punishes it. In an interrogation, this type of violence is much more emotionally charged. Police officers who beat up a detainee to avenge one of their own or to make them "pay" for insolent behavior are motivated by emotion more than tactics, in light of the results this gives for the investigation file. However, their goal here too is to intimidate and to break through the detainee's defenses.

Whether physical violence, psychological violence, or a combination of the two is used, the power dynamic is wielded in the same aim: to force the interrogated person to cooperate with the police's interests.

I've gotten a glimpse of the impact that physical violence can have during interrogation/detention through two personal experiences. Nevertheless, I don't feel that I have the legitimacy or the knowledge necessary to give you advice for protecting yourself or resisting in these situations. Instead of writing down information at random, I'd rather leave it to others to fill out these pages<sup>12</sup>.

To elaborate on this topic, I recommend these books :

- 🔥 Coco Fusco, *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators*, Seven Stories Press, 2008
- 🔥 KUBARK, *The CIA Document of Human Manipulation*, 1997

---

<sup>12</sup> I'll happily include their advice in future editions of this book. Feel free to contact us via the email address at the end of this book.



*"In situations where people could be in danger and it's essential to get information out of someone, I imagine that techniques at the limit of legality—but still legal—could be used out of necessity."*



# Defending yourself

*After looking at the different attacks possibilities that the police use during interrogations, this chapter focuses on the leads and tools for defending ourself.*

# 15. The trap of lying

When accused of something, there are three possible reactions:

- 🔥 Acknowledging and accepting the accusation (part of it or all of it).
- 🔥 Denying the accusation, either by lying (if the accusation is true) or by vindicating oneself (if it's false).
- 🔥 Refusing to respond and remaining silent.

Lying can be understood as an instinctive defense mechanism that kicks in when facing accusation. It's the most common defense that the police see used. Lying means challenging the inspectors on their home turf, since you're agreeing to have a discussion. It means agreeing to confront them, with all of the risks that entails, according to rules that you didn't establish.

Learning to lie takes tremendous effort. Especially when you're under pressure and unprepared for what's happening. Lying means inventing a story that aligns with information the police already has and which you may not know about. It takes a strong imagination, great self-control and a very good memory—especially when you have to retell the same story a day or a month later without making any mistakes or having been able to take notes.

In police academies, future investigators train to combat lies and to turn them against the liar. Through nonverbal communication, they learn to recognize the body language of a person who's lying. In the quicksand strategy [[page 55], they may push the interrogated person to dig themselves deeper and deeper with lies and then destabilize them by saying that they're aware of the lies and that they've lost all credibility.

During their training, the police officers use different games to learn to detect lies. Here are two examples:

- 🔥 **Two people are having a discussion.** Each person has a topic that they must not talk about. During the discussion, each one has to figure out their partner's taboo topic and prevent their own from being discovered. This game teaches them to detect when someone is trying to hide part of the truth or avoid a specific topic.
- 🔥 **Several people are seated around a stack of cards.** Some cards have an image and others just have a question mark. Each person draws a card in turn without showing it to the others. If the card has an image, the person has to describe it. If the card has a question mark, the person has to describe an image without letting on that they're inventing it as they go. The other people have to guess if the person is describing a real image or not<sup>13</sup>.

Given the training that inspectors have and the difficult circumstances of an interrogation, I don't recommend lying as a defense strategy. In my opinion, it involves too much risk for oneself and others and it's not an effective strategy.

---

<sup>13</sup> We've adapted a version of this game to create a fun, educational tool that shows how hard it is to lie in the circumstances of an interrogation. See *Taceo #1*, Édition Projet Evasions, 2020.

## 16. Erroneous beliefs that lead to collaboration

During the workshops that I give on defending oneself against the police, I've encountered all kinds of false beliefs about what it means to refuse to talk during an interrogation. In this chapter, I explain why I consider these opinions to be misguided..

### I have to answer questions from the police.

I've often heard this response, which seems to be deeply rooted in the collective imagination. I think there are three reasons behind it: the position of authority that police hold in our societies, the idea that there is a legal obligation to answer questions from the police, and the fantasies transmitted through Western fiction. Let's take a closer look.

**Police authority:** in our authoritarian democracies, we're taught from a young age about figures of authority and the obligation to obey and respect them: our parents, teachers, doctors, and all kinds of "specialists."<sup>14</sup> The notion of authority is taken for granted and obedience to authority is emphasized much more than the importance of asking questions and thinking critically. The police (and uniforms in general) confer an impression of moral authority and legitimate superiority. This cultural and social construction gives the unconscious impression that when a police officer asks you a question, you must respond or you'll be scolded, just like when you refused to answer your parents or teachers.

Let's consider this with some objectivity. In my view, we should all have the freedom to live our lives as we see fit, with full autonomy

---

<sup>14</sup> The most striking experiment on this subject was by Milgram and it's been repeated in various forms. See Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*, Harper & Row, 1974.

over our choices. However, we're subject to a whole host of social constructions, constraints and norms. Recognizing these authority figures and the social norms linked to them, as well as recognizing the legitimacy of being master of one's own life, are useful first steps for breaking free. Transgressing these constructions, constraints and norms is often difficult and influenced by our (unequal) status in society. Transgression is not without consequences, but it can set us free. When faced with police authority figures during an interrogation, transgression is a supremely necessary tool to have at hand.

---

***Recognizing authority figures and social norms is a key first step for refusing to comply with them.***

---

**Legal obligation:** In most jurisdictions, refusing to answer questions from the police as a defendant is not punishable by law. Refusing to express yourself is a right that can't legally be held against you. Depending on the country, you may have the legal obligation to give up certain specific information that enables them to verify your identity: full name, address, date of birth, nationality, profession, etc.

If, during a trial, you decide to stick to silence, a judge can certainly be upset with you for not answering their questions and their irritation may influence your sentencing. You have no control over that. But as soon as this element is presented as an incriminating factor that justifies your conviction, that strays outside of the legal framework and your lawyer(s) will have an excellent basis for an appeal.

**Legal obligation:** In most jurisdictions, refusing to answer questions from the police as a defendant is not punishable by law. Refusing to express yourself is a right that can't legally be held against you. Depending on the country, you may have the legal obligation to give up certain specific information that enables them to verify your identity: full name, address, date of birth, nationality, profession, etc.

If, during a trial, you decide to stick to silence, a judge can certainly be upset with you for not answering their questions and their irritation may influence your sentencing. You have no control over that. But as soon as this element is presented as an incriminating factor that justifies your conviction, that strays outside of the legal framework and your lawyer(s) will have an excellent basis for an appeal.

**Ideas from fiction :** Police investigations<sup>15</sup> have inspired plenty of movies, TV shows, comic strips, plays and so on. We're very entertained by police officers working on investigations. Even though most of us have never experienced an interrogation, everyone has an idea of what it's like.

Since I became interested in the subject of interrogation techniques, I've been evaluating police fictions differently. One thing has struck me: how rare it is to encounter a suspect who refuses to collaborate with the police. I've never read or seen "I have nothing to declare" used as a primary defense during an interrogation in a police novel or TV series. When a person expresses their refusal to respond, they either wait for their lawyer to be present, or they end up speaking anyway due to the pressure exercised by the inspectors. Which is understandable! To create an interesting police fiction, the investigation has to advance. There have to be new developments in the story as new elements show up. As spectators, our interests align with those of the investigators: we want the investigation to make progress. Fictional advances must arrive one after the next, often through witness hearings and interrogations led by CSI: Miami investigators.

This is the image that police fictions give us: an interrogation composed of a cop asking questions and a defendant answering them. An act of resistance may be represented by an attempt to lie, but never by an obstinate silence.

---

<sup>15</sup> Works fall under the "police investigation" category when the spectators/readers learn about the story from the point of view of a police officer, journalist, detective or someone else in charge of an investigation.

**Exercise**

The next time you watch or read a police fiction, ask yourself the following questions:

**Did the inspector(s) get answers to their questions during the interrogation(s)?**

**Did these answers enable the police to proceed with the investigation, discover new information or come up with new hypotheses?**

**Would the investigation have made progress if this information hadn't been uncovered?**

*"But the problem is a real one, not a mere intellectual game. Because today we live in a society in which spurious realities are manufactured by the media, by governments, by big corporations, by religious groups, political groups – and the electronic hardware exists by which to deliver these pseudo-worlds right into the heads of the reader, the viewer, the listener [...]"*

*The police are always good and they always win. Do not ignore that point [...] What a lesson that is. You should not fight authority, and even if you do, you will lose. The message here is, Be passive. And – cooperate. If Officer Baretta asks you for information, give it to him, because Officer Baretta is a good man and to be trusted. He loves you, and you should love him."<sup>16</sup>*

---

16 Philip K Dick, *How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later* (1978)

## **If I don't talk, I'll look suspicious.**

"If you don't want to answer our questions, that means you have something to hide. Only hardened criminals refuse to answer our questions." This is the type of argument that police officers learn to use against people who refuse to speak. No one wants to seem suspicious. Seeming suspicious is most of the way to being guilty, isn't it? No. It's completely different. And, suspicious to whom? It's often the police officers that you want to look innocent for. But they're not the ones who hand down your sentence. The judges are. "Seeming suspicious" is not legal evidence or any kind of evidence whatsoever.

The paradox is that out of a desire to seem less suspicious, people are driven to justify and explain and therefore provide information that condemns them. The police often lean hard on your perceived need to explain yourself.

## **Rather than silence, it's lying that will get me out of trouble.**

Police officers are trained to detect lies as well as questions that make you uncomfortable. Staying credible while lying requires tremendous concentration, an excellent memory, lots of imagination and a sharp mind. You have to be able to repeat exactly the same lie down to the last detail several hours/days/months later. What's more, as long as you're still in the police station, you don't know what information they have about you in the case file or what evidence they may have found where the events took place.

One police strategy consists of prodding you to tell more and more lies and then burst your bubble by making you confront evidence of your falsehoods.

---

***An answer always leads to a new question.***

---

### **I did nothing wrong.**

What about the others? What about your friends? Maybe the reason why you were summoned is that the police want information on someone else you know, not you. Some people say they want to make statements only about themselves, without saying anything that would implicate someone else. However, in a criminal investigation, the stories aren't separated neatly into "mine" and "theirs." There are simply separate elements that connect here and there and give an overall picture. Through addition or elimination, each piece of information that the officers get is a piece of the puzzle that leads to a more complete and clear picture of what happened. As a person being interrogated, you can't know what the police are interested in, what they will be able to use, how or against whom they will use it. Even if you don't mean to compromise someone else through your declarations, it's out of your hands.

Finally, even if you did nothing wrong, your interrogation will be recorded and will give the police more information on you for the next time you end up at the police station.

### **The cops will stop putting pressure on me if I say something, anything.**

This idea is understandable. As we saw earlier, the list of pressure techniques that the police use is long, especially for detainees. Blackmail is part of their arsenal of manipulation: "The sooner you spit it out, the sooner you can go home." In fact, the opposite is usually true.

If you start to talk, you signal that you're opening up and the inspectors will pry you open even further until they've gotten what they want. Starting to talk also shows them that their pressure tactics work on you. Why would they stop if they're getting the desired results? The pressure won't stop—you'll be squeezed like a lemon until the last drop.

## 17. Protecting yourself through silence

Let's go back to the context of an interrogation for you, the interrogated person:

You know very little about the investigation concerning you and about the information that the police have. It's an unusual and stressful experience. You don't know what's going to happen to you. If you're detained, you undergo a swath of additional pressures due to the conditions of your imprisonment and deprivation of liberty. You're faced with people trained in advanced manipulation techniques who have lots of professional experience and some knowledge of your profile.

The police's strategies and techniques have one thing in common: they cannot achieve their objectives without the participation of the interrogated person. Here lies the best defense you have. If you refuse to collaborate, you destroy the weapons that the police could use against you. Offering only a calm "I have nothing to declare" shows that you won't give them anything to work with. Furthermore, staying silent prevents you from filling up the investigation file with your declarations (be they truthful or not). You don't put anyone in danger. Not yourself nor anyone else.

The best way of sticking to this strategy is to act like a broken record. You just repeat your decision not to declare anything over and over, without raising your voice, without providing any further justification, using the same words (or similar) every time. This shows your determination while keeping you in the same emotional state.

"I do not wish to give a statement."

"I do not wish to give a statement."

"I do not wish to give a statement."

The earlier you express your desire to remain silent, the easier it'll be to stick to it. The inspectors will try to get you to change your

mind, especially by making you feel guilty for not answering, or by telling you that your silence will make you seem suspicious and count against you.

After the interrogation, if the case is sent to a judge, you'll have the opportunity to consult the investigation file and see what information the police gathered about you. You'll also be able to communicate with a lawyer and get advice on the best way to protect yourself from then on. If you choose to make statements during the trial, you'll be able to do so in an informed manner, with a much smaller risk of getting yourself into trouble.

---

***Silence is by far the most effective and  
least dangerous defense strategy.***

---

### **A bit of history**

---

Karl Victor Hase was born on November 23, 1834 in Jena, Germany. At age 19, he started studying law in Heidelberg, where he was sentenced to 6 days in prison for contradicting a priest. Later, one of his student friends killed another student in a duel gone wrong. Karl Victor Hase gave him his own passport so he could flee to France. After crossing the border, the friend threw away Hase's passport, which was later found and sent back to the Heidelberg authorities. Hase, by then a lawyer, was accused of helping his friend flee and was interrogated. During his interrogation, he repeated over and over, "Mein Name ist Hase, ich verneine alle Generalfragen, ich weiß von nichts"—my name is Hase, I refuse to answer your questions, I don't know anything. This didn't give the investigators enough information to narrow down their hypotheses: Hase was an accomplice and had given his friend the passport for this purpose; Hase had lost his passport and his friend had found it and used it to flee; or maybe Hase's dueling friend had stolen his passport.

Once Hase was acquitted due to lack of evidence, the phrase "Mein Name ist Hase, ich verneine alle Generalfragen, ich weiß von nichts," circulated rapidly through the law schools in Germany and

the Netherlands. It got shortened to “Mein Name ist Hase, ich weiß von nichts”—my name is Hase and I don’t know anything—and has been used to conceptualize the legal defense represented by remaining silent when faced with an accusation. Even now, this phrase is well-known in Germanophone culture as a popular expression that also appears in song lyrics. Karl Victor Hase, meanwhile, eventually became a doctor of law at the university of Jena.

It wasn’t until 1966 that the right to silence was enshrined by article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. “In the determination of any criminal charge against him, everyone shall be entitled to the following minimum guarantees, in full equality: [...] Not to be compelled to testify against himself or to confess guilt.” Later, the European Court of Human Rights took up this right as fundamental and the very basis of a fair trial. According to the ECHR, granting the right to remain silent “makes it possible to avoid the acquisition of evidence by force or under pressure and thereby avoids miscarriages of justice.” History shows us that miscarriages of justice have not, in fact, been avoided.

## **Police counter-technique**

While interrogation techniques have been described at length in police manuals, I’ve only seen a few tips on what to do when faced with a detainee who refuses to talk. I see this as a good thing: to me, it indicates that they lack an effective way to counter the strategy of silence. Let’s take a look at the tips they do recommend:

- 🔥 The police officers will argue with the interrogated person about the reasons for their refusal to answer questions. They’ll tell the person that it’s within their right to refuse, but that out of curiosity (or, in order to put it in the interrogation report), they’d like to know why. If the person answers, the discussion will continue and slowly turn back to the questions. It’s a mix of the funnel strategy and the commitment/emotional investment strategy [page 55]. What you need to remember here is that you shouldn’t elaborate on why you refuse to respond. That would be a response in and of itself and would run the risk of pulling you into the discussion.

- 🔥 Silence can be uncomfortable in social situations, especially in a discussion among several people. The investigators might play off of this by letting the conversation trail off into silence and staring at you after you've declared that you don't want to answer their questions. They want to make you uncomfortable so that you speak up to break the silence. If that knocks you off guard, you might as well take the opportunity to let your imagination wander and think about something other than the present situation—maybe some fond memories or something you're looking forward to.
- 🔥 Another common strategy is for the police officers to “accept” your refusal to answer their questions, but continue to read out their list of questions anyway and make you repeat your refusal after each one. The idea here is that by reading out these pointed and leading questions, they'll make you feel that you need to justify your actions. Don't let them get to you. Saying “I don't want to answer your questions” once is perfectly sufficient. Remain stoic and silent until they get tired of waiting for you to break and leave you alone.
- 🔥 The police often also try to intimidate the interrogated person by telling them that their refusal to give a statement will be held against them in the potential future trial.
- 🔥 The use of physical violence against the interrogated person is theoretically prohibited in the manuals mentioned above. That's why I haven't mentioned it here. That said, we all know that it occurs frequently and that despite the “legal” framework the police are supposed to abide by, they might resort to violence [page 98].

### *The exception that confirms the rule*

Like any rule, the rule of silence has an exception that confirms it. In this case, it's routine checks. Let's take the example of a routine check by customs officers in a train crossing a border. The customs officers make their way through the train to check the passengers. Their goal is to find the people without valid residence permits or transporting illegal goods. The border guards don't have the time or resources to stop every passenger to check their identity, let alone to check their baggage. They use filters to whittle down the pool of passengers to check. The first filter is, infamously, racial profiling<sup>17</sup>: they will target the young, the non-White, the poor and those traveling alone. Anyone who strays from the White bourgeois norm. However, even after using this first filter, there are still too many people to check thoroughly. The second filter is then applied: a routine check. The customs officers take a few moments to ask you three or four basic questions. Where are you coming from? Are you traveling for business or pleasure? Where are you going? And so on. As long as you don't contradict yourself, your responses aren't that important. It's the way you answer that they're paying attention to. Do you seem nervous? What is your body language like? Did you hesitate before replying? Are your hands shaking? Just like they do during an interrogation, the officers try to determine if you're lying or hiding something or if one of these questions is sensitive for you. If they think so, they'll turn it into a thorough verification of your papers and your baggage and they'll interrogate you in greater detail.

---

17 Racial profiling (or ethnic profiling) refers to the discriminatory behavior of the police toward an individual or group of individuals based on their real or perceived racial or religious origins. The term "racial profiling" highlights the intrinsically racist nature of this practice. For more information on this subject, see the website of the Swiss Alliance Against Racial Profiling: [stop-racial-profiling.ch](http://stop-racial-profiling.ch)

These practices are also used during roadside stops and at protests. In a situation like this, if you answer “I have nothing to declare and I’m using my right to silence,” as soon as you’re asked a question, it’s very likely that you’ll end up at the police station for more thorough questioning.

This type of contact with the police is rather particular. You’re not totally at liberty, and you’re answering under duress, but you haven’t been arrested either and you’re not a defendant in an investigation. The challenge is to stay calm and answer as tersely as possible: In my suitcase? Oh, dirty laundry and books. Yes, I went to visit some friends. Now I’m on my way home.

If you feel cornered and the questions start to get too specific, it’s time to pull out the shield of “I don’t wish to answer further questions.”



“Police saturate working-class, Black and Brown neighborhoods with explicit legal permission. Courts validate endless police stops. Stopping someone for walking in a “high-crime area”? Perfectly legal. Searching a car for drugs because the Black driver paused too long at a stop sign? Perfectly reasonable. As police commonly joke about racial profiling, ‘It never happens—and it works.’”

Naomi Murakawa, *Police reform works – For the police*, 2020

# 18. Mental defense

## Reducing sources of stress

---

Being confronted with legal proceedings, interrogation and/or police custody can cause stress that will weaken your psychological defenses. The police officers are aware of that and seek to emphasize this phenomenon. Fortunately, some sources of stress can be anticipated.

I distinguish between two types of stress:

**Stress from within.** This is the pressure imposed by the current conditions of the legal process, mainly due to the logistics of detainment. Can I use the restroom whenever I need to? Am I bored? Am I too hot or cold? Do I have access to my medications and/or my personal hygiene items? Am I facing systemic oppression such as racism, antisemitism or transphobia? Hostility and threats from the police officers present can also be sources of stress.

**Stress from outside sources.** These sources of stress belong to the world outside of your detention/interrogation. You think about the fact that your loved ones must be concerned about you, you wonder what information the police has or might find during their investigation, and you worry about your friends since you can't get in touch with them. You worry about your potential sentence and what people will think of you if you're convicted. The inspectors know how to tap this source of stress. They slide in a few insinuations to make you doubt yourself.

---

***They know that when you're back in your cell, you'll go over the whole interrogation in your head, sentence by sentence, and they hope to influence your thoughts and decisions this way.***

---

On one hand, there's your immediate situation and its various aspects that cause discomfort, stress and anxiety. On the other hand, there are stressors external to your current situation that are out of your control. What stresses you out is the vicious cycle of worrying, fearing the worst, and creating mental scenarios about what's happening outside and what will happen in the near future for you.

My advice is to consider these two types of stress separately. Take the time to think about the sources of stress that you're directly confronted with and try to find ways to remedy them. Is loneliness weighing on you? Maybe writing letters to your loved ones would help you feel less alone<sup>18</sup>. Is the threatening attitude of the police scaring you? Remember that their power is limited and that they're trying to intimidate you on purpose. Are you stressed out by the interrogation? Tell yourself a story or think about a pleasant memory to distract your brain and allow yourself to think about something else. Take the time to understand what the stressors are and how to minimize them. You may have to try several strategies before landing on a good one.

As for the factors you have no control over, let them slide off you like water off a duck's back. When you're detained or in an interrogation, that's not the right time to address them. Save your energy for the present and deal with the future later. You'll have time to prepare for your trial and the other legal consequences; to confront others'

---

<sup>18</sup> You may be forbidden to send letters, but you can still write them to whomever you like. It's a nice way to pass the time and create a mental connection with someone who is far away.

perception of you; to repair that which must be repaired; to take care of yourself, your loved ones and the victims of the affair; and to self-analyze. What's most important right now is staying strong in front of the police officers who are trying to find the weak points in your defense.

Limit the amount of space you give anxious thoughts so that they can't overwhelm you. For example, give yourself an hour each day to think about all of the external elements weighing on you and creating stress. Open the box and observe what's inside. Think about the legal and social risks ahead, your loved ones, the consequences of your absence from your usual life, and how to remedy the suffering that you may have caused to others. Welcome the emotions that these thoughts provoke in you. Let yourself feel them. It might be painful and difficult. You might feel lost. Nevertheless, feelings like to be listened to. It's the best way to learn how to manage them constructively and reduce the negative impact that they can have on you. To face these anxiety-provoking subjects, you can write down your hypotheses about what might happen to you and what might be happening outside. Some of these hypotheses might be very optimistic while others are deeply pessimistic. Then, compare them and listen to the emotions that arise. Do you find these scenarios realistic? What can you do to influence them?

At the end of the time you've set, close the box again. Empty your head and think about something else. A little ritual might help you return to the present moment. It could be a workout, reading a chapter of a book or writing down your thoughts. Then, close your mind as firmly as possible to all insinuations from the police officers. When they bring up a subject that you find stressful, let it slide off you and focus on something else. You'll think about it during your next reflection session. In this manner, you can considerably reduce the investigators' influence over you when they probe at sensitive subjects to upset you.

If you deny your fear or other difficult emotions, you turn down the opportunity to treat yourself with kindness and to offer yourself the support and comfort you need. In the patriarchal imagination, strength is a virile value that eschews all weakness. A strong person is one who feels no fear and has no points of vulnerability. Many people internalize this value system and hide their fears from themselves as well as from others, which prevents them from managing their

feelings effectively. Feminist schools of thought, among others, suggest another way of reading the situation. We are all vulnerable. All of us have weaknesses. Strength means knowing how to welcome them and live with them without letting them overcome us.

---

***If you refuse to listen to your anxieties and fears, your emotions will bubble up elsewhere in the form of intense anger, irrational behavior, terrible anxiety or fits of tears.***

---

Don't isolate yourself when you think you may be arrested. Without telling your loved ones any compromising details, you can discuss this risk with them. Preparing together for a potential arrest or detainment can help you get through those events with greater calm. The more you've talked about it in advance, the more you'll have thought about what to do if it does happen and the less worried you'll be, once you're at the police station, about what's happening on the outside. Leave clear instructions for your friends on how to react, who to notify (family, employer), what to communicate, where to go water the plants or feed the cat, which lawyer to contact, and so on. An encrypted USB key held by a person you trust is a secure and efficient medium for transmitting these instructions<sup>19</sup>.

### **Distancing yourself from the police**

As we've seen, several manipulation strategies rely on an emotional/human connection between you and the police officers. The stronger this connection is, the easier it is for them to use it to make you feel guilty, reassure you, worry you, criticize you, give you hope, capture your attention, and otherwise influence your emotions.

To counter this strategy, remember the asymmetry of the situation. On one side, there's you, the defendant in a legal process in which the State is investigating you to determine your guilt or

---

<sup>19</sup> A good software to do this is Veracrypt. <https://www.veracrypt.fr/en>

innocence. You're locked up and put under pressure by the police. On the other side, there are the police officers who are doing their usual jobs as public servants. They've seen hundreds of people in your situation and they know to act understanding and thoughtful in order to create a sense of attachment [page 55]. If they do you favors, that means that they've first ruined your day so thoroughly that receiving a bottle of water or a coffee makes you feel grateful. Remember, THEY are the ones responsible for the fact that you're not sitting peacefully at home with a coffee and a book. Refusing to get caught up in discussion with them is a very effective way to maintain an emotional distance between you and the inspectors.

One golden rule of self-defense against manipulation is to disregard all criticism from the manipulators. It's not worth your time. If your behavior or actions upset those close to you, listen to criticism from people who are looking out for your best interests. Criticism and self-evaluation, when it's constructive and honest, helps us grow and mature. But it requires a non-coercive environment in which those receiving and giving critiques are on equal footing. The police don't care about who you are, what you want, what's important to you, or anything else. They have their own agenda and interests that have nothing to do with you as a person. The inspectors may well say that they're looking out for you and that they're doing this for your benefit, but who locked you up in this room? Who's threatening you and pressuring you?



*"Once I went back at 10 p.m. because I suspected that the person wanted to confess. The day had been very busy with a lot of people and noise and so on. At 10 p.m., I took the person out of his cell, offered him a coffee, and we started to talk. I was like his therapist. And I got a confession because we were finally having a real discussion."*

## Retaining decision-making power

---

A direct effect of police custody and pre-trial detention is that you're deprived of the power to make decisions. You don't decide when you eat, when you have social interactions, when the light in your cell is turned on or off, who you see or if you have access to reading material. This feeling is hard to grapple with. It's especially dangerous when it follows you into the interrogation and gives you the unconscious impression that since you no longer have decision-making power in your everyday life, you can't refuse to collaborate with the police either.

One way to resist this sense of dispossession is to create, as best as you can, a daily schedule for yourself. Decide at the beginning of the day how you'll spend your time. For example, choose to spend two hours working out, one hour writing, and two hours reflecting on the things stressing you out. Of course, you may be interrupted in the middle of your workout by police officers sent to take you into the interrogation room or out for a walk. Regardless of the interruption, remember how much time you have left and as soon as you get back, pick your workout back up where you left off. It'll help to set goals that you can achieve; the sense of accomplishment will be beneficial for you. Furthermore, working out speeds up your heart rate and improves the circulation of hormones and neurotransmitters throughout your system. Sports have some chemical effects similar to those of antidepressants through the creation of serotonin. Working out is also an enjoyable way to pass the time.

Another strategy is to focus on the moments when you successfully resisted rather than the moments when you were under the most pressure. You can't go anywhere, you're locked up, the police is rummaging through your life and the lives of your loved ones. You can't do anything about that. There are, however, some things that you can withhold—your cooperation with their work, for example. You can refuse to give up the information they want and refuse to cede to their blackmail and bargaining. Holding fast to your principles is an act of resistance that you can be proud of and that can give you strength.



Lenz looked at his two interrogators and rejoiced. They could lock him up; let him rot in solitary confinement for days, weeks, or months; take Hannah and the children away from him and determine his family's future; but there were two things that they couldn't do: make him an idiot or a snitch. Their power only stretched so far. What a satisfying sensation, and how it boosted his confidence!

Translated extract from the book *Krokodil im Nacken*, Klaus Kordon, 2008

## Letting go

---

While you work to reclaim your decision-making power, it also makes sense to learn how to let go. From the moment of your arrest, you have no more control or influence over what happens: when your detainment will end, the number of interrogations you'll undergo, the police officers' manipulative actions, what's happening on the outside. Whether you make a fuss or stay calm, the events will continue to unfold. However, if you do get flustered, especially when trying to justify your actions or share some information to get yourself out of trouble, you risk making mistakes and making your situation worse. The best thing to do is let go. Let time pass, let the pressure and stress slide off you. Your situation is no fun at all but this too shall pass. What's important is to survive it to the best of your ability. This means avoiding making your case worse by succumbing to pressure or making mistakes.

Here's a technique for letting go that's easy to use when you're being detained or interrogated<sup>20</sup>:

If you notice that you're not able to keep your anxious thoughts at bay, stop what you're doing. Take a deep breath in and hold it. Hold your breath for as long as you can while listing out loud all of the objects you see around you. You'll see how effective this is for keeping dark thoughts away.

---

<sup>20</sup> These days, there are plenty of guides and self-help books on letting go, of varying quality. Go ahead and check them out.



Once again, the lieutenant let him stew for a long time. But that didn't concern Lenz. He knew now that it would only make his life harder if he waited for each interrogation like a man dying of thirst waits for a drink of water. He couldn't do anything. The Stasi controlled everything. However, he could learn to wait. They'd have to come get him again someday. He was in detainment, not in prison; at some point, they'd need this detention cell for future traitors of the State.

Translated extract from the book *Krokodil im Nacken*, Klaus Kordon 2008

## 19. Imagination and the image of a hero

One of the most brutal effects of State repression is that it's unexpected. It's a terrible surprise that turns your regular life upside down. Most of the time, you're not prepared for it at all. It's the kind of thing that we might believe only happens to others. Unfortunately, that's not the case. State repression can affect anyone, anywhere and at any moment. Imagining yourself in this situation can help you prepare for it, whether you do this exercise alone or with others. Think about your fears and weaknesses. Anticipate your reactions to solitary confinement. Imagine the emotions that might overwhelm you.

To imagine yourself in such a situation, you might take inspiration from stories like these:

- 🔥 *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, Alexander Berkman, Frontier Press, 1970.
- 🔥 *On the way to Magadan*, Ihar Alinevich, Radical Theory & Practice 2017
- 🔥 *Living My Life*, Emma Goldman, Knopf, 1931.
- 🔥 *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, George Jackson, Lawrence Hill Books, 1994.
- 🔥 *Blood in My Eye*, George Jackson, Black Classic Press, 1996.
- 🔥 *Writings from a Greek Prison: 32 Steps, or Correspondence from the House of the Dead*, Tasos Theofilou, Common notions press, 2019
- 🔥 *The prisoner's Herbal Book*, Nicole Rose, Active Distribution, 2019

When facing State repression, I find it essential to avoid virilistic posturing (attempting to square up to the police on their home turf). The police force is a brutal, violent institution that sets itself at the high end of a power imbalance in order to break down the individual. Through emotional contagion, you might get the idea that you should

be strong and heroic in order to resist. We're all familiar with the image of the strong warrior with no chinks in their armor, who police try in vain to take down. But in real life, this image quickly reveals itself to be a fantasy.

I'd prefer to encourage you to adopt a resilience mindset. Recognizing, accepting and welcoming our vulnerability and weaknesses is truly important. The toxic masculine mentality that casts weaknesses as demeaning and shameful is really stupid. Experiencing detainment and interrogation is hard, unpleasant and potentially traumatizing. The situation will be a little different for each person, but no one escapes unaffected. It'd be surprising at the very least. Anyway, the more familiar you are with your own fears and weaknesses, the better you can handle them. Pretending that you're too badass to be concerned won't help. You'll end up discovering your weaknesses when they're used against you, and that's really not the best occasion to start learning how to accept and overcome them.

You could talk about State repression with your friends, too. How would they react if you were taken into custody and they couldn't reach you?

---

***Showing yourself and others that you accept your weaknesses and fears with grace is the first step toward facing them with confidence, and ultimately overcoming their power over you.***

---

## 20. Taking care of yourself and others

*Take care of each other so we can be dangerous together.  
Queer anarchist slogan*

Detainment and police confrontation can be traumatizing and leave scars. Afterward, in the initial rush of joy at being set free, it's easy to underestimate the long-term impacts of such experiences.

There are some signs that may indicate the presence of trauma. These include panic attacks; feelings of guilt, shame, or self-hatred; loss of *joie de vivre*; loneliness; feelings of abandonment or uselessness; decision paralysis; questioning the value of political and interpersonal involvement; the impression that life has no meaning, value or point; and the resurgence of traumatic memories. Sometimes, these reactions arise well after the triggering events—weeks, months or even years later.

If you notice these signs in yourself, don't try to deal with them alone. Surround yourself with good friends whom you can confide in and find a therapist who specializes in trauma. Writing about what happened from beginning to end, including how you felt, can be a good way to externalize the events. What's more, it can be helpful to have the full story written out for future use. You might need it during the trial, for example.

If one of your friends has been through an experience like this, ask how they're doing and what they need. When you get out of a hostile and violent environment like that, there's nothing better than knowing that people care about you and are there to support you during this ordeal.

## Talkin circle g

---

The talking circle is a good tool for externalizing your experience and recognizing that you're not alone in what you've been through. Gather several people who have experienced detainment and/or interrogation and whom you trust. In turn, each person can share whatever they want to share about their experience. They might talk about how it happened, the anxieties and doubts they felt, the hardest moments, the stress they felt, or the impact on their daily life in the medium-to-long term. The others simply listen without asking questions, criticizing or judging. Just this can be very meaningful.

It allows you to realize that you're not alone and that others have experienced and felt similar things. You realize that feelings and experiences that you thought were anecdotal, shameful or insignificant actually do resonate with other people. You realize that just talking about it can help others. Within a circle like this, you can set taboos aside and break the silence; you can learn to listen to others, express yourself and politicize your experiences.

## Writing letters to prisoners

---

Actively supporting prisoners is a storied tradition in anarchist communities. One common practice is to write them letters. Social isolation is part of the carceral mechanism. Imprisoned people are deliberately cut off from the outside world, their social environment, and political movements. Chipping away at this isolation through letter-writing can help people bear prison life in a very concrete way. You can write postcards or commit to long-term correspondence. You can send magazines, newspapers or articles printed from the Internet. You can try out epistolary role-playing games together<sup>21</sup>.

It's not always easy to get in touch with prisoners. Some want to preserve their anonymity while others are so isolated and cut off from the world that they don't have a relay point on the outside. To facilitate the task, there are several lists of prisoners as well as guides on writing letters to imprisoned people.

---

<sup>21</sup> For a guide on this subject, see "Le jeu de rôle à l'assaut de l'enfer carcéral" on [projet-evasions.org](http://projet-evasions.org) (Some games available in English.)

Writing guides :

🔥 [nycabc.wordpress.com](http://nycabc.wordpress.com)

🔥 [solidarity.international](http://solidarity.international)

The strength of a community can be measured by the way in which it takes care of the most vulnerable. People deprived of freedom are clearly part of this category.

## 21. What about when things go wrong?

Remember this: during an interrogation, the police put a lot of effort into manipulating you as effectively as possible, especially by playing off of your fears and weak points. Everything is set up so that you'll have a terrible experience. The purpose of this book is to transfer knowledge and skills to you so you can protect yourself as well as possible from the pressure of an interrogation.

Police manipulation works because of behaviors that are widely accepted in our society. It also works because of the principles laid out by our moral code (that we should help each other, tell the truth, obey authority, answer when spoken to, etc.). Furthermore, manipulation aims at the specific weaknesses you have due to your personal background and experiences. Traps are set for you and you might fall in some of them. If that happens, you should under no circumstances feel ashamed for falling prey to police manipulation strategies. If an interrogation goes badly, don't waste your energy feeling ashamed, remorseful or guilty. Sometimes you do crack, cede to the pressure and have your will broken. When you're already in a hostile environment, what do you have to gain from self-flagellation? It won't help you at all in the present moment—it'll just divert a lot of mental and emotional energy, which will weaken you further during subsequent interrogations. You can open the door to these thoughts later, when the danger is at a safe distance. It's just as important to do this as it is to recognize your own mistakes and weaknesses.

That later time will be the right moment to repair what can be repaired, to understand and to learn. I can only advise you to be compassionate with yourself. But I think it's also key to be honest and transparent about your own flaws, whether you're reflecting on them alone or with other people who are affected. If you're interrogated about an affair that concerns someone else, you absolutely must be transparent with the other people involved about what was said or left unsaid, because it'll impact them too. The worst-case scenario is that one person cracks during their interrogation and gives information to the police, but doesn't dare to admit it to the other people

involved. This leads to a breach of trust as well as a waste of precious time that could've been used to protect yourselves from the consequences of the information disclosed.

Are we screwed no matter what we do? The police hope to beat you down into resignation so that you'll give up. If all is lost, why exhaust yourself with fruitless attempts at resistance?



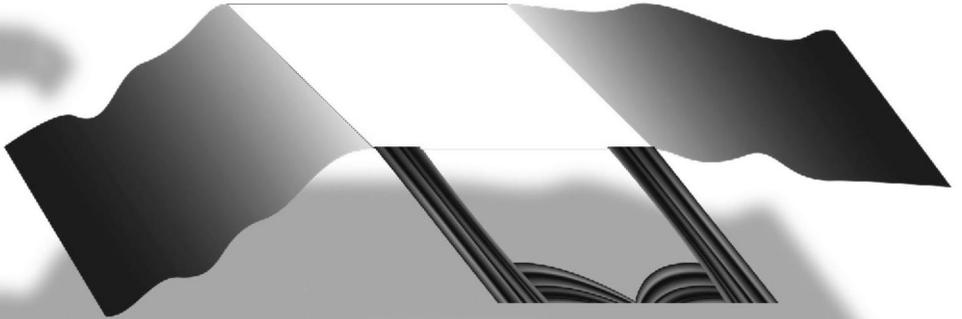
On the second day I was taken downstairs for examination. A youth in his twenties was my inquisitor. He demanded to know about our secret Bolshevik mission in Europe, why we had stayed in Riga so long, with whom we had associated, and what had become of the important documents he knew we had smuggled into the country. I assured him he still had much to learn to achieve fame and fortune as an interrogator of such an experienced criminal as he had before him. I would not take him into my confidence, I told him, even if I had any information that he might want. I would divulge, however, that I was an anarchist not a Bolshevik.

Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, Knopf

---

***In reality, nothing is ever completely lost  
and everything can always get worse.***

---



**Going beyond** the police,  
going beyond the criminal  
justice system

*The police do not prevent crime. [...] Experts know it, the police know it, but the public does not know it. Yet the police pretend that they are society's best defense against crime and continually argue that if they are given more resources, especially personnel, they will be able to protect communities against crime. This is a myth.*  
**David Bayley, Police for the Future, 1996**

What differentiates the police from an armed gang is that the police enjoy the status of an institution within the process of institutional justice. Whereas a street gang performs violent acts to further its own interests (or those of its leaders), the police perform violent acts for criminal justice. Questioning the very existence of the police as a social institution without questioning the entire **criminal justice system** doesn't make sense.

In representative democracies, the criminal justice system focuses on punishment. What I mean by punishment is that the criminal justice system wants to make a person pay for having broken a law so that the person is prevented from doing so again and so that others are discouraged from behaving similarly. The suffering inflicted on the person found guilty is supposed to reestablish a balance: the crime must be compensated for by an amount of suffering that the judges and the criminal code deem equivalent. The role of the criminal justice system is to punish and it always does so within a historical context. Whether it's punishing tax fraud in Switzerland in 2021, falsification of documents in the USSR in 1955, or abortion in Ireland in 2013, the logic is the same. An authority establishes the legal framework to follow, the police track down those who don't follow it and the justice system punishes them.

Since it is punitive, this form of justice concentrates mainly on the guilty and the State toils continuously to develop an arsenal of punishments: fines, daily fines, community service, prison administration, administrative confinement, alternative sanctions, treatment as punishment, psychiatrization, deportation, entries in one's criminal record, and so on.

The abolition of the criminal justice system seems to me to be a central issue if we want to promote a form of living together that isn't based on coercion and authority, but on individual freedom and care<sup>22</sup>.

---

22 As conceptualized by different feminist strains of thought, care designates a set of interpersonal

There are many ways to go beyond institutional justice. Many political and social movements criticize it and are experimenting with concrete means of determining what societies could look like without police, courts and prisons: **prison abolitionism**, of course, and also feminism, anarchism, decolonial antiracism, and more locally populations such as the Zapatistas of Chiapas, the Rojava in Syria and several Indigenous tribes in North America.

---

practices based on empathy and mutual solidarity.

## 22. Transformative justice

Transformative justice is a practice developed to respond to problematic, oppressive and/or conflictual situations within a community. This concept of justice sees in each conflict a unique problem to be solved by focusing on the victims' needs and the involvement of the community affected. Instead of focusing on punishing the wrongdoer, the emphasis is put on transforming the harm done, particularly by transforming the social conditions that made this harm possible. The victim plays a central and active role throughout the process while the wrongdoer is encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and participate in the repair of the damage and injuries caused. Repairing the harm done and critiquing mechanisms of structural oppression are important parts of this approach.

Generation Five, which is based in Oakland (USA) and combats incest and child abuse, is one example of an organization that bases its work on transformative justice. They set the following goals:

- 🔥 Survivor safety, healing and agency
- 🔥 Community involvement, healing and accountability
- 🔥 Transformation of the social conditions that create and perpetuate violence and systems of structural oppression
- 🔥 Offender accountability and transformation

---

*People often talk about accountability when what they really mean is punishment. You can't make someone else take accountability. You can only accept your own responsibilities. But it is possible to create space to see if a person is ready to be accountable.*

**Myriam Keba**

---

## 23. A long-term effort

*Please note that this chapter deals with sexual violence. However, there are no explicit or detailed descriptions of such violence.*

Learning other ways to respond to oppression and interpersonal violence besides institutional justice is a long-term process. To move beyond the logic of control-punishment-repression established by the States, we have to learn to react to aggression with concepts other than the habitual "crime," "punishment," "truth," "law," and the heritage of the criminal justice system.

---

***One major difficulty is that we lack models for conflict resolution.***

---

Stories that depict conflict resolution in which the people concerned take action on their own initiative are almost 100% stories in which a single person, often male, metes out justice himself, usually in a bloodbath. These are stories about vengeance rather than collective transformation and offender accountability. The learning we need must take shape in our communities, networks, collectives and other groups. It will undoubtedly feature mistakes, failures, second-guessing and self-criticism.

To illustrate such a process, let's take a specific example from the punk-anarchist community in North America<sup>23</sup>. This community is a mix of kindred spirit and underground culture. People who identify as part of this community tend to share certain ideas (refusal of and resistance to authority, ecology, anticapitalism, feminism),

---

<sup>23</sup> This example, like the rest of this chapter, is strongly inspired by the text "Accounting for Ourselves" published by the anarchist collective CrimethInc.

practices (DIY, riots, dumpster diving) and places (concerts, protests, squats and community-run social centers).

Throughout the 1990s, women and survivors responded in several ways to the problem of sexual assault within this social group. They wrote about sexual assault in fanzines, naming the offenders, and distributed the fanzines at concerts. They created discussion groups for people affected by sexual assault. Punk-anarchist communities in neighboring cities were warned about repeat offenders and in some cases people were violently expelled from this sub-culture. In Portland, the collective Hysteria was one of the first to try to sketch out a structural response to sexual assault: they created and shared content on this theme, organized conferences on the subject, and set up support networks. In other cities, girl gangs sprang up, focusing on self-defense and taking action against perpetrators of sexual violence.

However, most of these efforts remained isolated and survivors of sexual assault trying to talk about their experience were constantly ignored, stigmatized and excluded, accused of drawing attention away from more important topics and seeding discord within the community.

In response to this situation, some anarchists worked to raise awareness within their communities about sexual assault, particularly by developing the concept of consent. The issues of survivor support, sex positivity and consent were discussed in zines, workshops and conferences. In groups critiquing masculinity, such as *Dealing With Our Shit* (launched in Minneapolis in 2002), men organized against sexism in their own scenes. A turning point occurred at the 2004 Pointless Fest in Philadelphia, during which the organizers announced publicly that three women had been raped at the event. Groups were created to support the survivors and figure out how to integrate the offenders into the transformation process. Two collectives that came together at that time, *Philly's Pissed* and *Philly Stands Up*, still exist today. Their actions are devoted to survivor support and assaulter intervention.

As time went on and more initiatives saw the light of day, sexual assault, consent, transformative justice and collective accountability became common topics at almost all anarchist gatherings and

events. Many punk labels started putting out zines and brochures on these subjects, bands spoke about them on stage and in their texts, and cities saw more and more groups dedicated to survivor support and transformative justice. At the anti-G29 convergence in Pittsburgh in 2009, the event organizers included “awareness groups” in their infrastructure to provide a direct response to instances of sexual assault.

To this day, concepts such as consent, support groups and transformative justice are widespread in the punk and anarchist community in North America. The taboo on talking about sexual violence has lifted somewhat and many cases of assault have come to light with alternative processes testing a non-institutional response to these problems. In some cases, sexual offenders have been guided through long-term reflection on their actions, while others have been barred from shared spaces. Brochures and gatherings have enabled discussion of different types of response to aggression, including their successes and failures. Books on transformative justice have been published and the concept of consent has been exported to other social milieus and become commonplace in the anarchist community. The collective Philly Stand Up now offers transformative justice training courses in colleges and universities.

What I want to show through this example is that the movement away from the police and the criminal justice system, and toward the establishment of new forms of response to conflict and oppression, is constantly evolving. We have to unlearn the punishment-and-authority mindset and reclaim our own power to act without external mediation. Taking back control over our lives without having a person to obey or a person to give orders to is a life-long process.

The first steps are already there. All we have to do is roll up our sleeves and get to work creating a means of handling conflict that preserves our autonomy.

For further reading :

- 🔥 Sarah Schulman, *Conflict Is Not Abuse*, Arsenal Pulp Press, 2017
- 🔥 Ching-In Chen, Jai Dulani, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (dir.), *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence within Activist Communities*, Cambridge, South End Press, 2011.

### *The parable of the five students*

*The criminal justice system can only punish, although there are so many other possible ways—generally better ones—of reacting to an unpleasant or painful event.*

**Louk Hulsman & Jacqueline Bernat de Cells**

To illustrate the fact that it's possible to have multiple reactions and responses to the same conflict, the abolitionist Louk Hulsman<sup>24</sup> wrote the parable of the five students:

Five students live together in a house. One day, one of them throws himself at the TV and breaks it. He also breaks some plates. His roommates have different reactions to this event: one is furious, doesn't want to live with him anymore and suggests evicting him from the house. Another student suggests that he replace the items that he broke. Another proposes a medical solution, thinking that his friend is sick. The last student wants them to all reflect together on what isn't going well in their shared house. So, several different solutions are offered for the same conflict. Punitive, compensatory, therapeutic and conciliatory. In reality, most interpersonal conflict unfolds outside of the penal system thanks to agreements, mediation, and private decisions among the people concerned.

---

24 Critical Criminology and the Concept of Crime, Louk Hulsman, 1986

# Call for translation and dissemination

This work was conceived of as a tool for self-defense, to help us learn collectively and individually how to protect ourselves from the police—until this institution is finally thrown into the garbage bin of history.

At the beginning, its contents were communicated orally during workshops and presentations. By writing it all down, I hope to reach a broader audience. But there are plenty of other channels for communication that might be worth exploring: podcasts, video tutorials, comic strips, etc. If you're interested in this kind of project, you're welcome to get in touch.

Furthermore, to expand the reach of this work, I'm looking for people interested in helping to translate it. Any and all languages would be helpful.

Please direct your messages, feedback and critiques to the following email address: [evasions@riseup.net](mailto:evasions@riseup.net).

To download a PDF version of the book or help, refer to the website [projet-evasions.org](http://projet-evasions.org) or the publishing email address: [evasions@riseup.net](mailto:evasions@riseup.net).

# Lexicon

**Alibi** A means of defense proving that a person was not at the scene of a crime when the crime was committed.

**Crime** "A crime is an illegal action or activity for which a person can be punished by law." Collins Dictionary

**Criminal justice system** All of the institutions (police forces, courts, prisons) tasked with punishing what criminal law considers to be infractions (misdemeanors, offenses and crimes).

**Defendant/Suspect** Person whom the police suspect of having committed a crime.

**Flagrante delicto** When you're caught by the police in the act of doing something illegal. At least one police officer must be able to testify to having seen you during the illegal act in order to classify it as in *flagrante delicto*.

**Forensic** The term "forensic" groups together different methods of analysis founded on the sciences (chemistry, physics, biology, neuroscience, computer science, mathematics, imagery, statistics, psychology) in order to serve the police's work and the interests of security.

**Informant** Person chosen due to their belonging to an ethnic or linguistic community, or to a given social group, to provide intelligence to an investigator. Informants are recruited by the police but are not members of the police force. The payment or benefits that they receive for informing depend on the jurisdiction. They might receive money or a lesser sentence, if they themselves are implicated in a case.

**Interrogation** In police jargon, interrogation is defined as the set of questions posed to a suspect or defendant as well as the answers they receive.

**Modus operandi** In the police environment, the modus operandi is a detailed description of the actions necessary for committing a crime. Comparing the modus operandi of two different crimes can enable the police to determine if they were committed by the same person or people.

**Offense** Synonym for crime. In some jurisdictions, the two may be differentiated by the level of gravity and the applicable punishment.

**Prison abolitionism** Prison abolitionism is a school of thought and political movement that aims to eliminate the entire criminal justice system (prisons, police, courts). Its origins date back to the movement to abolish slavery.

**Raid** Within the context of an investigation, the police may carry out a raid, which is when they search a private place for evidence.

# Ressources

## Police

- Paul Ekman**, *Telling Lies: Clues to Deceit in the Marketplace, Politics, and Marriage*, W.W. Norton & Company, 2009
- Diane Boszormenyi**, *L'influence des techniques policières d'interrogatoire sur la valeur de l'aveu. Étude à la lumière de la théorie des trois dimensions de la force publique de Monjardet*, Faculté de droit et de criminologie, Université catholique de Louvain, 2019 (in French)
- Williams Kristian**, *Our enemies in Blue. Police and Power in America*, Cambridge, South End Press, 2007
- Coco Fusco**, *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators*, Seven Stories Press, 2008.
- KUBARK**, *The CIA Document of Human Manipulation*, 1997
- Harold H.**, *Anarchist survival guide for understanding gestapo interrogation mind games*, Thompson, 2000, Microcosm Publishing

## Prison

- Alexander Berkman**, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, Frontier Press, 1970.
- Ihar Alinevich**, *On the way to Magadan*, Radical Theory & Practice 2017
- Emma Goldman**, *Living My Life*, Knopf, 1931
- George Jackson**, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*, Lawrence Hill Books, 1994
- George Jackson**, *Blood in My Eye*, Black Classic Press, 1996
- Tasos Theofilou**, *Writings from a Greek Prison: 32 Steps, or Correspondence from the House of the Dead*, Common notions press, 2019

**Nicole Rose**, *The prisoner's Herbal Book*, Active Distribution, 2019

**CORREIA, David and Tyler Wall**, *Police. A Field Guide*, New York, Verso, 2017

## Lists of prisoners

[nycabc.wordpress.com](http://nycabc.wordpress.com)

## Justice and self-defense

**Elsa Dorlin**, *Self-Defense: A Philosophy of Violence*, Verso Books, 2022

**Michel Foucault**, *Discipline and Punish*, Pantheon Books, 1977

**CROW, scott (dir.)**, *Setting Sights: Histories and Reflections on Community Armed Self-Defense*, Oakland, PM Press, 2018

## Transformative justice and abolitionism

**Sarah Schulman**, *Conflict Is Not Abuse*, Arsenal Pulp Press, 2017

**Ching-In Chen, Jai Dulani, Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (dir.)**, *The Revolution Starts at Home: Confronting Intimate Violence within Activist Communities*, Cambridge, South End Press, 2011

**Duff Koshka (dir.)**, *Abolishing the Police*, Londres, Dog Section Press, 2021

**Kaba Mariame et Andrea Ritchie**, *No More Police: A Case for Abolition*, New York, The New Press, 2022

**Maher Geo**, *A World Without Police. How Strong Communities Make Cops Obsolete*, New York, Verso, 2021

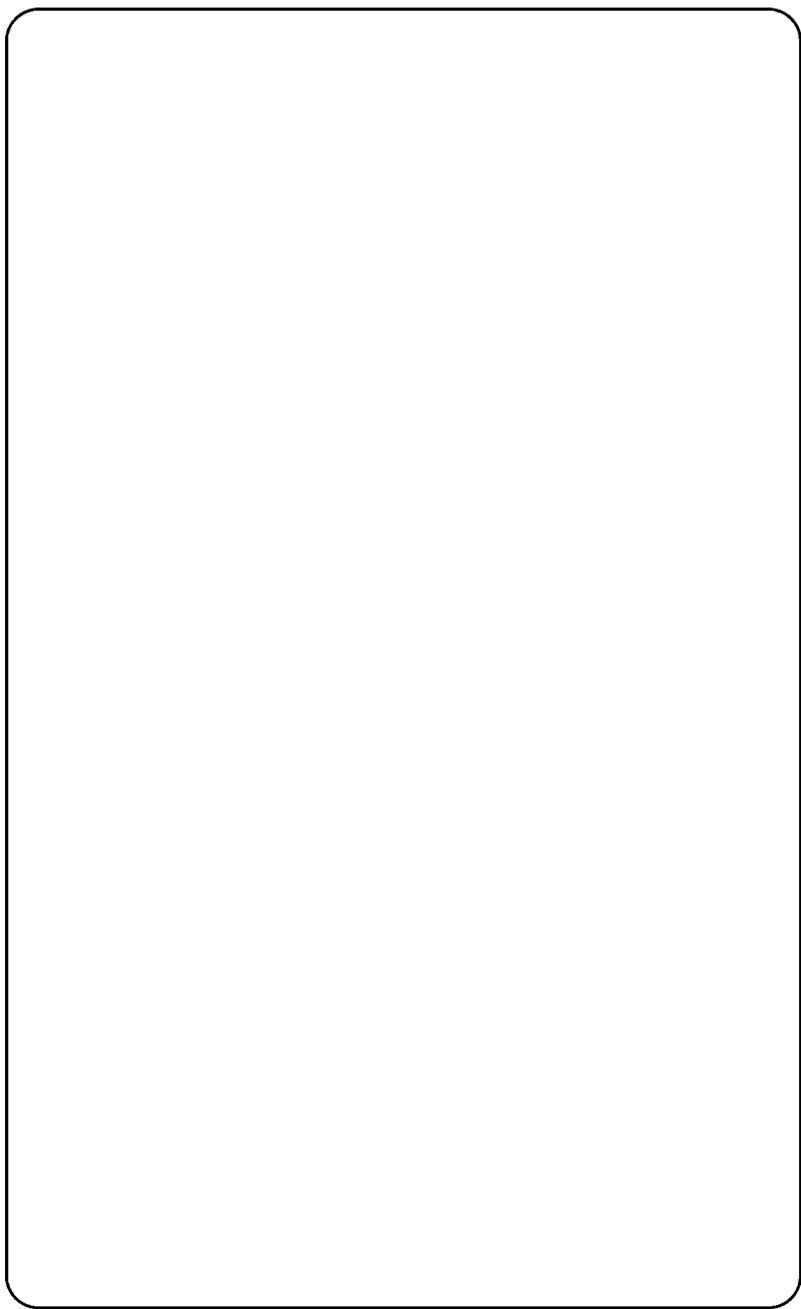
**Pasternak Shiri, Kevin Walby et Abby Stadnyk (dir.),** *Disarm, Defund, Dismantle. Police Abolition in Canada*, Toronto, Between the Lines, 2022.

**Vitale Alex,** *The end of policing*, New York/Londres, Verso, 2017.

**Notes**

A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for writing notes. The box is defined by a thin black border and occupies most of the page below the 'Notes' header.





*Projet-Evasions is a multilingual anarchist initiative that creates and diffuses emancipatory content. When we're not daydreaming about sexpositive evenings, we're organizing ourselves into networks of sparkling accomplices on subjects that inspire and concern us. Deep inside us, under a thick layer of glitter, simmers a deep hostility to all forms of authority and a burning passion for freedom... all wrapped up in golden and silver chocolate paper (vegan, of course).*

*We don't wish to confine ourselves to a single linguistic zone, preferring to travel freely through contributions, translations and inter-human complicities. If, rather than using our real identities, we remain behind the screen represented by the project-evasions, it's because we're more comfortable in the shadows than exposed to the spotlight of celebrity and repression - no face, no case.*

An interrogation is not a  
harmonious exchange between two  
individuals.

It's a conflict.

And in this conflict, our ignorance  
is our strength. Ignorance of the  
meaning of police work, ignorance  
of the manipulative techniques used,  
ignorance of the legal framework and,  
last but not least, ignorance of our  
means of defence.

In response to this observation,  
this book is intended as a tool for self-  
defense against police interrogation  
practices of interrogation.

