

# WITNESS TO A **CRIME** IN THE BAR

## Investigative interviews with alcohol-intoxicated witnesses

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### Background and aim

Prior studies on intoxicated witnesses have almost exclusively used 'positive' (i.e. free recall, open-ended questions) to elicit witness recall. In contrast, police officers in the U.S., Canada and UK have been found to use mainly 'negative' interviewing techniques (i.e. closed questions, yes/no questions, leading questions). The aim of present study was to examine how different interview methods affect witness recall.

### Method

Participants were recruited for a study about drinking and cognitive processing at the Department of Psychology, Florida International University, USA. After an extensive medical screening, eligible participants ( $N = 102$ ) were included in the experiment. The present study examined the effects of interview methods on intoxicated witnesses' recall of a live staged event in a bar lab involving both physical and verbal interactions (a confederate searching for his items while verbally offending and touching the bar guests, i.e. the participants). Participants were randomly assigned to a 3 (Intoxication level: sober vs. placebo vs. intoxicated) x 3 (Interview method: positive vs. negative vs. mixed) between-subject design. Participants drank three beverages, were involved in the interactive event, and were then interviewed some minutes after the event using one of the three methods.



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*Intoxicated witnesses remembered as good as sober ones.  
The positive interview method made all witnesses recall more details.*

