

Research Article

Cross-Cultural Similarities and Differences in the Interrogation of Suspects

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Abstract

This narrative review examines cross-cultural similarities and differences in the interrogation process of criminal suspects, with a focus on how cultural norms, legal frameworks, and communication styles influence investigative interviewing techniques and methods. The practice of interrogation has evolved from a confession-driven strategy and the use of coercive methods to a more evidence-based and ethical approach, as represented by the Méndez Principles of Effective Interviewing and the PEACE model in the United Kingdom. Cross-cultural evaluations demonstrate that planning, cognitive interviewing, and rapport-building are increasingly being recognized as globally accepted best practices; however, their application remains inconsistent due to variances in professionalization, training, and institutional support across jurisdictions. Communication styles are heavily shaped by cultural norms, and perceptions of questioning tactics vary considerably among cultures. The review draws a distinction between interrogation, suspect interviewing, investigative interviewing, and information-gathering interviewing, as these terms carry different legal and ethical implications across jurisdictions. The review highlights the difficulties in protecting vulnerable groups (including juveniles, persons with mental health conditions or cognitive impairments, non-native speakers, and culturally marginalized suspects) in incorporating human rights safeguards and in customizing training to fit local cultural environments. A methodological note is provided to clarify the narrative scope of the review, its search parameters, and its thematic organization.

Keywords

Investigative Interviewing, Suspect Interviews, Cross-Cultural Similarities And Differences, Peace Model, Méndez Principles, Human Rights, Vulnerable Populations

1. Introduction

The interrogation of suspects is one of the most essential stages in the criminal justice system. Visual evidence such as surveillance video, body cam recordings, or videotaped person-to-person interviews can have a significant impact on legal choices, societal trust, and judicial impartiality in law enforcement. Historically, the practice of suspect interrogation has evolved from confession-driven and forceful methods to

more ethically sound and structured procedures. The 2021 Méndez Principles of Effective Interviewing represented a significant turning point, establishing a human rights-based worldwide standard that rejects aggressive and coercive approaches in favour of structured and psychologically informed procedures such as the information-gathering model and the PEACE model [2, 6]. Building on this development, Bull

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(2024) demonstrated how the field has developed over the last 25 years, highlighting the growing acceptance of non-coercive and non-accusatory approaches, as well as the importance of ethical norms. Walsh et al. have documented a coordinated global effort to standardize interrogation procedures across diverse countries [3]. However, the procedures and theoretical frameworks underpinning these strategies may not translate uniformly across cultures, given that cross-cultural differences in communication norms, power dynamics, and legal frameworks substantially influence how suspects are interviewed, how interviews are understood, how interviewers interpret suspect behaviour, and what is considered effective or ethical interrogation and investigative interviewing [4, 5].

The growing globalisation of policing standards, influenced by international human rights frameworks such as the 2021 Méndez Principles on Effective Interviewing (written in response to a recommendation made to the United Nations) and the Eastern Africa Police Chief Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO) Standard Operating Procedures in Africa, has raised awareness about ethical approaches to interrogation methods [6, 7]. Their implementation, however, varies considerably across nations, owing largely to differing cultural attitudes towards individual rights, power dynamics, and truth-telling (e.g., [20]). The available research further indicates that culturally uninformed interrogation practices can impair rapport development, increase the risk of false confessions, and heighten misunderstandings, particularly among vulnerable or marginalised populations [8-10].

Many previous studies have examined specific national practices or evaluated specific interviewing methods, such as the PEACE method and the Reid Technique. A deficit of synthesised, comparative cultural knowledge capable of integrating these disparate perspectives nevertheless remains. Therefore, the current article seeks to address this gap by examining cross-cultural similarities and differences in suspect interrogations and interviews.

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify the key terminology used throughout this review. The terms interrogation, suspect interviewing, investigative interviewing, and information-gathering interviewing are not synonymous, and their meanings carry different legal, procedural, and ethical implications across jurisdictions. *Interrogation* has historically referred to a confession-oriented process, often associated with accusatorial and confrontational strategies such as the Reid Technique [11]. Investigative interviewing and information-gathering interviewing represent a more recent paradigm shift towards open, non-coercive, evidence-based practice, exemplified by the PEACE model [14, 37, 65]. Suspect interviewing is a broader procedural category that may encompass both approaches depending on the jurisdiction. In jurisdictions that have moved away from confession-oriented models, the term *interrogation* is often avoided in official policy because of its coercive connotations [53, 63]. Throughout this review, these terms are used with awareness of these distinctions, and where the original source literature uses *interrogation* in a historical or comparative sense, this is preserved in order to faithfully

represent the practices described.

The article focuses on seven key themes: (1) dominant interviewing models, (2) cultural influences on communication and compliance, (3) perceptions of interviewing techniques, (4) professionalization and training in interrogation practices, (5) consideration of human rights in interrogation practices, (6) vulnerable and minority populations in cross-cultural settings, and (7) cultural perspectives on confession, truth, and deception.

2. Methodology

This article is a narrative review rather than a systematic review. The distinction is important: whereas a systematic review employs a pre-registered, reproducible search protocol with quantitative synthesis, a narrative review aims to synthesise, interpret, and critically evaluate a body of literature thematically (see, e.g., [85]). The present review was conducted with the explicit goal of providing a theoretically grounded and cross-culturally sensitive synthesis of the literature on suspect interrogation and investigative interviewing, with particular attention to how cultural, legal, and institutional factors shape practice.

The literature search was conducted across the following databases: PsycINFO, Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, and HeinOnline (for legal sources). Search terms included combinations of the following keywords and Boolean operators: investigative interviewing, suspect interrogation, PEACE model, Reid Technique, Méndez Principles, false confessions, cross-cultural interviewing, cultural competence in policing, human rights AND interrogation, and *vulnerable suspects*. Sources were considered if published between 2000 and 2025, except for foundational texts of established theoretical importance (e.g., Gudjonsson, 2002 [38]; Hofstede, 2001 [68]). The time frame was selected to capture both the emergence of global investigative interviewing reform and its subsequent cross-cultural applications. Two further sources (Vredeveltdt, Given-Wilson, and Memon; Weiss, Nell, Lobi, Tredoux, and Vredeveltdt) are formally dated 2026 in their respective journal volumes but were published online in 2023 and 2024 respectively, within the stated search window; they are retained on this basis.

Inclusion criteria required that sources address: (a) suspect interviewing or interrogation practices, (b) cultural, jurisdictional, or legal variation in such practices, or (c) human rights, vulnerability, or training in the context of investigative interviewing. Sources were excluded if they addressed only witness interviewing without reference to suspect contexts, or if they pertained exclusively to forensic assessment without any investigative interviewing component. The material reviewed encompasses empirical studies, field studies, experimental research, systematic reviews, legal analyses, international guidelines, and policy documents. The weighting given to different source types is discussed where relevant, and the evidentiary strength of claims is qualified accordingly throughout

the text.

The review is organized around seven thematic domains, identified through an iterative reading of the retrieved material and refined through discussion between the authors. A summary table is provided at the end of the article (see Table 1) to

map each theme onto key jurisdictions, cultural variables, dominant practices, major risks, and implications for training and policy.

Table 1. Summary of Thematic Domains, Jurisdictional Coverage, Cultural Variables, Dominant Practices, Major Risks, and Training/Policy Implications.

Theme	Key Jurisdictions	Cultural Variables	Dominant Practice	Major Risks	Training/Policy Implications
1. Dominant Models	UK, USA, Norway, China, Malaysia, Australia	Legal tradition, adversarial vs. inquisitorial systems	PEACE model; Reid Technique; hybrid models	False confessions; coercion; inconsistent implementation	Adopt evidence-based models; ensure institutional support and monitoring
2. Communication & Culture	South Africa, USA, East Asia, Latin America	High/low-context communication; power distance; nonverbal norms	Varied use of eye contact, silence, indirect speech	Misreading of cues; wrongful suspicion; interpreter failures	Cross-cultural competence training; qualified interpreters
3. Perceptions of Techniques	UK, USA, China, Japan, South Korea, Latin America	Individualism/collectivism; trust in institutions; history of authoritarianism	Variable perception of rapport, minimization, maximization	Cultural misalignment in rapport strategies; distrust	Culturally adapted rapport training; public trust-building
4. Professionalization & Training	UK, Norway, NZ, USA, Africa, Japan, China	Resource availability; cultural norms toward authority; institutional culture	PEACE-based; Reid-based; informal; rights-compliant (EAPCCO)	Training gaps; lack of standardization; poor transfer to practice	Sustained, evidence-based, culturally tailored training with supervisory support
5. Human Rights	UK, Norway, China, Latin America, Philippines, Mexico	Power distance; political will; legal culture	PACE, ECHR, ICCPR, UNCAT, Méndez Principles	Coercion; torture; exclusion of vulnerable groups from safeguards	Operationalize rights frameworks through training, recording, legal access
6. Vulnerable Populations	UK, Australia, Canada, China, Africa, Latin America	Cultural definitions of vulnerability; collectivism; mental health stigma	Appropriate adults; legal counsel; qualified interpreters; inconsistent elsewhere	False confessions; rights violations; inadequate safeguards	Differentiated safeguards by vulnerability type; specialized training
7. Confession, Truth & Deception	East Asia, Middle East, North Africa, Indigenous communities, West	Honour-shame dynamics; collectivism; indigenous epistemologies	Voluntary false confessions; indirect truth-telling; narrative-based truth norms	Misreading cultural truth-telling as deception; wrongful convictions	Cross-cultural deception training; reject universal lie detection models

Note: Theme numbers correspond to the thematic sections of the review.

3. Theme 1: Dominant Interviewing Models

Interviewing models from various jurisdictions reveals both

(i) divergent philosophies of justice and (ii) culturally rooted ideas about the nature of guilt, truth, and authority. The interrogation and investigative interviewing literature is traditionally divided into two major paradigms: the Reid Technique and the information-gathering model (e.g., the PEACE model).

Although some similarities exist between the two paradigms, such as the emphasis on planning and organising the interview to elicit information from the suspect, their underlying aims, ethical implications, and structural features have historically differed considerably.

The Reid Technique, which has traditionally been utilized in the United States, was initially based on a confrontational approach. It used a variety of techniques to try to obtain confessions [11]. Critics have long contended that this technique increases the risk of false confessions [12], particularly among vulnerable suspects, including those from collectivistic cultural contexts, who may be more inclined towards deference to authority [13]. It is important to note, however, that more recent versions of the Reid Technique have incorporated greater emphasis on rapport development and evidence-based interaction, and some researchers caution against overstating its risks without accounting for methodological constraints in the false confession literature [44, 45]. The comparison between accusatorial and information-gathering approaches is therefore best understood as a continuum rather than a binary opposition; many jurisdictions employ hybrid or transitional models, and institutional training, legal safeguards, judicial admissibility rules, and recording requirements all mediate how interviewing models are implemented in practice.

In contrast, the PEACE model, developed in the United Kingdom and increasingly being adopted in parts of Europe and Oceania, is based on an investigative and ethical approach. This model emphasises rapport building and the use of open questions, and uses evidence as a tool to gather additional information and clarification rather than confrontation. The available research evidence indicates that it is effective in eliciting relevant information from suspects without recourse to coercive techniques. Recent research has demonstrated that investigative interviewing tactics, such as the PEACE model, are more effective than forceful approaches for obtaining meaningful information from suspects [14]. Akca, Di Danieli, Shane, and Eastwood found that even short-term PEACE training courses can significantly improve interviewer performance, though individual differences can influence training outcomes [15]. In a systematic review, Akca, Lariviere, and Eastwood found that continual reinforcement and institutional support, rather than merely course design, often determine training efficacy [16]. Brimbal et al. discovered that training law enforcement investigators in rapport-based strategies resulted in substantially higher information production and less reliance on accusatorial procedures [17]. The PEACE model's adaptability to multiple cultural contexts has led to its increased appeal in a growing number of locations worldwide, including Australia, Canada, Scandinavia, and New Zealand. The application of this approach is not uniform, however. Walsh, Bull, and Areh found that, despite widespread acceptance of the PEACE model, substantial variation exists in its monitoring, implementation, and training depth, which can significantly influence how interviews are conducted in practice [18, 55]. Walsh and Bull also found that even highly trained interviewers encounter difficulties in applying all

PEACE competencies consistently, particularly when suspects persistently deny the alleged offence [35].

When considering non-Western interrogation and interviewing practices, their approaches generally reveal hybrid models. In China, a study conducted by Zeng et al. found a historically confession-focused system that has incorporated some principles of investigative interviewing and the PEACE model [20]. Cultural values such as deference to authority, however, may well shape the dynamic between suspects and interviewers. Similar studies in Malaysia also indicate that hybrid techniques are utilized and shaped by local policing culture [21-23]. These cross-national distinctions are not purely institutional; they likely reflect deeply embedded legal traditions, philosophical orientations, social norms, and communication practices. Countries heavily influenced by adversarial legal cultures, such as the United States, tend to adopt models that focus on confessions, whereas inquisitorial systems, such as those found in the United Kingdom and the Nordic countries, prioritize information collection. The existence of hybrid models in postcolonial societies complicates these dichotomies by emphasising the significance of cultural context in shaping both the implementation of suspect interviews and their objectives. A truly globalised understanding of suspect interviewing and interrogation must move beyond a binary view of techniques and engage with how history, law, and culture interact to produce varying models, each with its own limitations, ethical considerations, and strengths.

4. Theme 2: Cultural Influences on Interview Dynamics and Communication

The dynamics of interrogation and investigative interviewing are shaped not only by procedural frameworks and training, but also by deeply ingrained cultural norms that influence how individuals interpret authority, respond to questioning, and express deference. Cultural variations in communication styles (including high versus low context, nonverbal behaviour, power dynamics, and social distance) may substantially affect investigative interview outcomes. High-context cultures, such as those found in many Asian, Latin American, and African societies, frequently employ indirect communication styles that rely heavily on tone and nonverbal cues such as eye contact [4]. In contrast, low-context cultures (e.g., Western Europe, North America) emphasise explicit, direct verbal communication [4, 25]. This disparity can give rise to miscommunication, as interviewers from low-context cultures may interpret communication behaviours such as avoidance of direct eye contact or hesitation as indicators of deception, when such behaviours in fact reflect cultural norms around shame avoidance or respect for authority [26, 27].

Likewise, power distance, defined as the extent to which members of a society accept unequal power relations, typically plays an important role in the interrogation process.

Some studies suggest that suspects in high power-distance cultures tend to regard law enforcement authorities as unquestionable and respond by complying, submitting, and even making false confessions, particularly when confronted with a dominant, assertive, or closed-ended questioning approach [28, 29]. This pattern presents significant obstacles for rapport-building approaches such as the PEACE model, which depend on open communication and the development of trust between interviewers and suspects.

The likelihood of misinterpretation in cross-cultural settings has been highlighted in several publications. Johnson found that police officers in the United States frequently misinterpreted culturally appropriate behaviours among minority suspects, including emotional restraint, avoidance of eye contact, and closed body language, as indicators of dishonesty [29]. The risks of applying monocultural assumptions to suspect behaviour have been further highlighted by Alexander, who additionally noted that interpreters lacking cultural competence training may exacerbate these problems by reproducing power imbalances, omitting contextual nuance, or adopting an inappropriate tone [30].

The role of interpreters in cross-cultural suspect interviews deserves more sustained attention than it typically receives in the literature. Interpreter-mediated police interviews involve not only linguistic translation but also pragmatic, cultural, emotional, and procedural dimensions that can profoundly affect the fairness and accuracy of an interview [77]. Such risks include the use of untrained interpreters, police officers serving as ad hoc interpreters, or family members assuming the interpreting role, all of which compromise both impartiality and accuracy. Untrained interpreters may omit contextual information, alter tone, introduce additions, or inadvertently reproduce power dynamics that undermine the rapport-building principles of models such as PEACE [30, 77]. Even trained professional interpreters face challenges in conveying culturally embedded pragmatic meaning across high-context and low-context communication styles. The quality and cultural competence of interpretation, therefore, constitute a critical, and frequently underappreciated, determinant of outcomes in cross-cultural investigative interviewing.

Attempts to tailor interviewing models and approaches to different cultural dynamics are nonetheless growing. In South Africa, investigators have developed intercultural frameworks to account for nonverbal and linguistic disparities, with the goal of aligning suspect questioning with local norms of interaction [31]. International guidance documents such as the Méndez Principles emphasise the need for a more inclusive, culturally sensitive, and linguistically accessible approach at all phases of the investigative process. Without cultural competence, even the most ethically well-intentioned interrogation procedures may misjudge or inadvertently coerce suspects. Understanding how communication norms are culturally produced is essential for both efficacy and fairness in cross-cultural investigative contexts.

5. Theme 3: Perceptions of Interrogation Techniques Across Cultures

Cultural norms, customs, policing traditions, and institutional values collectively shape how interrogation and investigative interviewing techniques are perceived and interpreted. Practices regarded as acceptable and appropriate in one cultural context may be perceived as unprofessional or coercive in another. The use and acceptance of practices such as minimisation (e.g., moral justification), maximisation (exaggerating the consequences of denial), evidence disclosure, and rapport building differ considerably across jurisdictions, not merely in their application but also in how interrogators and suspects perceive and comprehend them [71, 66]. Kassin, Appleby, and Perillo demonstrated that the acceptance of confrontational strategies such as maximization and minimization varies considerably across legal systems, with their applicability diminishing in jurisdictions that have adopted information-gathering models [32]. Strategic evidence disclosure techniques are also used inconsistently, with variability in their influence on suspect cooperation and perceptions of justice [33]. Alison et al. found that while rapport-based interpersonal methods are promoted internationally, they are applied to varying degrees and are culturally mediated in the way suspects perceive them [34].

Some Western legal systems, particularly those in individualistic societies such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and parts of Western Europe, have undergone a significant transition away from confession-driven techniques towards more investigative interviewing models, such as the PEACE model [36]. These models emphasise open-ended questions, rapport-building, and evidence-based approaches [37]. Gudjonsson [38] and Snook et al. [39] note that these approaches are widely regarded by legal professionals and practitioners as more effective, ethical, and conducive to reducing false or coerced confessions.

In contrast, several East and South Asian countries, including China, Pakistan, South Korea, India, and Japan, have historically relied on interrogation procedures that treat confession as the foundation of the process. In China, suspect interrogation has traditionally focused on obtaining confessions of guilt through moral appeals and persistent questioning [40]. Legal systems in India continue to emphasise confession-based evidence, with documented concerns about high-pressure and abusive questioning [41]. Japan has historically been criticised for its 'hostage justice' system, in which prolonged interrogations are designed to extract a confession rather than accumulating factual information [24, 42]. South Korean police officers have similarly demonstrated reliance on psychological coercion framed within legally permissible practices oriented towards eliciting confessions [43]. In these contexts, suspects may not always experience such techniques as coercive, but rather as culturally normative processes for acknowledging wrongdoing and restoring moral equilibrium. It must

be noted, however, that significant reforms have been underway in several of these jurisdictions, particularly Japan and South Korea, and that characterisations of entire legal systems as uniformly confession-driven risk overgeneralisation. Changes in statutory provisions, judicial admissibility rules, and mandatory recording requirements in several of these countries suggest that the picture is dynamic and contested [57, 58, 62].

In the United States, updated versions of the Reid Technique are still commonly used, though contemporary training places greater emphasis on rapport development and evidence-based interaction [44, 45]. In Latin American countries, strong and denunciatory approaches have traditionally been used, and the legacy of these practices continues to shape perceptions [48]. However, a recent survey of Central and South American investigators found them to disagree with dominance and control approaches while agreeing with tactics relating to integrity and rapport [46].

Haddad et al. note that some individuals in positions of authority regard psychological coercion as justified when it yields a confession [49]; nevertheless, human rights training is increasingly promoting transparency, accountability, and dignity-preserving practice [49]. Rapport-based approaches are also culturally situated: in collectivistic cultures, rapport may be established through a shared collective identity, personal connections, or indirect communication, whereas in individualistic societies it may rely on honesty, transparency, and autonomy [19, 50]. Cultural misalignment in rapport-building strategies, such as using direct confrontation in a culture that values harmony and deference, can be counterproductive, resulting in disengagement and miscommunication [51]. Finally, previous experiences, public trust, and media coverage of law enforcement all influence how any form of questioning by authorities is perceived, underscoring the significance of systemic transparency and public accountability alongside interview-level reform.

6. Theme 4: Professionalization and Training in Interrogation Practices

Professionalization and training are necessary but not sufficient conditions for ensuring that interrogation and investigative interviewing processes are both ethical and effective [52, 76]. The content and delivery of training differ considerably across cultural and legal contexts, and these variations directly shape how suspect interviews are conducted in practice [53, 54]. Professionalization in Western judicial systems, such as those of the United Kingdom, Norway, and New Zealand, has been heavily influenced by research-based reforms aimed at reducing coercion and protecting suspects against false confessions. The introduction of the PEACE model in the United Kingdom in the early 1990s marked a significant paradigm shift towards investigative interviewing. Bull (2024) traces this evolution over 25 years, showing how rapport-building, evidence-based questioning, and thorough preparation have

become the foundation of ethical interviewing internationally [54]. This is supported by continuing review, with interviewers expected to demonstrate proficiency through performance assessments and knowledge evaluations [56].

In contrast, formal training in several other countries has traditionally focused on confession-based procedures. Japan has undergone shifts away from purely confession-driven approaches towards a greater emphasis on suspect rights, psychological dynamics underlying denials, and evidence-based questioning [57-61]. In China, professional training incorporates ethical norms and legal knowledge regarding the interrogation process, yet confessions continue to play an important role in case resolution [20]. In South Korea, training has become more structured and legally constrained over time [62]. In the United States, interrogation training in police academies was historically dominated by the Reid approach, though several states have begun incorporating cognitive interviewing and rapport-based tactics inspired by the PEACE model [86].

In developing and under-resourced contexts, training gaps are frequently compounded by the absence of standardization. In many African countries, investigative interviewing training is inadequate or absent, forcing interviewers to rely on informal or self-taught skills [67]. Initiatives such as the EAPCCO standard operating procedures have begun to address this through rights-compliant institutions and training, though implementation remains challenging [7]. The 2021 Méndez Principles on Effective Interviewing, which promote a rapport-based, non-coercive, human rights-grounded approach, are also receiving increasing attention from multiple countries [2, 3, 64].

Institutional support, including supervision, cultural acceptance of continuous improvement, and accountability mechanisms, also shapes training outcomes. Research indicates that even well-designed training programmes may fail to produce sustained behavioural change if they are not supported by organisational commitment, planning, and ongoing reinforcement [16]. Cross-cultural research further suggests that training content should be tailored to local cultural norms and communication styles rather than translated verbatim from another legal system [9]. Hope et al. noted that cultural differences in social expectations, communication norms, and memory can have a significant impact on how interviewing techniques are perceived and applied, underscoring the importance of contextually grounded training [9]. Similarly, Chung, Ding, and Sumampouw found that Malaysian police and victim care officers hold culturally constructed beliefs about child interviews and memory, highlighting the need for training that reflects local professional norms [73].

7. Theme 5: Consideration of Human Rights in Interrogation Practices

Human rights considerations in the suspect interrogation process sit at the intersection of cultural norms, ethical standards, and legal obligations. Cross-border frameworks such as

the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the Méndez Principles, and the United Nations Convention against Torture (UNCAT) articulate clear standards prohibiting coercion and torture; however, the extent to which these principles are implemented varies significantly across jurisdictions. Cultural factors substantially influence legal systems, resource availability, prevailing attitudes regarding the balance between state authority and individual rights, and the political context in which policing operates.

Human rights protections are heavily integrated into procedural safeguards in many Western democracies. For example, the United Kingdom reinforces the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), which requires suspects to be informed of their rights, protected from abusive enquiries, and provided access to legal representation. Norway has incorporated human rights protections into its investigative interviewing paradigm, aligning rapport-based tactics with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and UNCAT [87]. In certain jurisdictions, forceful or coercive approaches are not only considered unethical but also likely to yield inadmissible evidence in court.

In contrast, in some authoritarian contexts, formal adherence to international human rights treaties may not translate into operational reality. China's criminal procedural legislation formally prohibits torture and requires that coercively obtained confessions be excluded; however, application is not always consistent, particularly in high-profile or politically sensitive cases. Research conducted in various Latin American and African countries has shown that psychological and physical coercion persists, with officers justifying coercive interrogation tactics as necessary for public safety or effectiveness [46, 63].

A critical dimension of human rights compliance, beyond the mere prohibition of torture, concerns the translation of international standards into concrete operational safeguards. For investigative interviewing practice, human rights requirements translate into a specific set of procedural obligations that vary in their implementation across jurisdictions. These include: the right of suspects to access legal counsel from the earliest stage of detention; protections against both physical and psychological coercion; mandatory recording of interviews on audio or video in order to ensure accountability and facilitate judicial review; the provision of qualified, professionally trained interpreters who are distinct from law enforcement personnel; special safeguards for children and vulnerable adults, including the presence of an appropriate adult or legal representative; and the exclusion from criminal proceedings of evidence obtained through coercive or improper means. Where these safeguards are absent, the formal ratification of international instruments such as UNCAT or the ICCPR offers limited practical protection. It is therefore insufficient to assess human rights compliance solely at the level of legal frameworks; the operationalization of those frameworks through institutional policy, training, supervision, and accountability mechanisms is equally essential [63, 64, 68, 69, 75].

Cultural attitudes and values also influence how individuals perceive what constitutes a violation of their rights. Suspects in high power-distance societies may tolerate and anticipate more authoritative interrogation, whereas in low power-distance societies, such conduct is more likely to be experienced as abusive [28, 29]. Because suspects from different cultural backgrounds may perceive the same approach very differently, this complicates the cross-cultural application of uniform global standards. The Méndez Principles advocate for a total abandonment of coercive and confession-driven techniques in favour of investigative interviews built on openness, trust, and rapport [6]. Training initiatives based on these principles are underway in countries such as the Philippines and Mexico [6, 70], though systematic evidence on their impact on complaints about hostile treatment and information quality is not yet available. Their long-term effectiveness depends on sustained political will, robust oversight mechanisms, and high-quality training.

Human rights protection in the interrogation context extends beyond the prohibition of torture and coercion to the particular treatment of vulnerable groups. Individuals with cognitive impairments, children, and non-native speakers frequently require additional safeguards to ensure that their participation in the interrogation process is voluntary and informed, and that they genuinely understand what is happening [72-74]. In legal regimes where such safeguards are not consistently enforced, these populations stand at heightened risk of human rights violations. Progress towards international consensus is notable, yet ethical interrogation remains both an operational and a moral imperative. Bridging the gap between formal commitments and operational reality requires sustained attention to cultural competence, institutional accountability, monitoring systems, and training.

8. Theme 6: Vulnerable and Minority Populations as Suspects in Interrogation

Vulnerable individuals, including those with mental illnesses or cognitive disabilities, minors, non-native speakers, trauma-exposed individuals, migrants, linguistic minorities, and culturally marginalised groups, present distinct and complex challenges when questioned by law enforcement authorities. It is important to emphasise that vulnerability is not a single homogeneous category: different populations require different safeguards, and the mechanisms through which vulnerability affects interrogative outcomes vary considerably across groups. What it means to be vulnerable, and how vulnerability is identified and managed in practice, are further shaped by cultural values, institutional conventions, and prevailing social beliefs.

Juveniles, for example, are more susceptible to compliance and acquiescence under authority pressure than adults, and their developmental stage affects both their comprehension of legal rights and their capacity to provide reliable accounts [72-

74, 78]. Persons with intellectual disabilities or severe mental illness may exhibit heightened suggestibility, reduced capacity to understand caution procedures, and increased vulnerability to false confessions even in the absence of coercive intent [74]. Trauma-exposed individuals may display dissociative responses or heightened physiological arousal during questioning, behaviours that can be misread as indicators of deception by culturally uninformed interviewers. Non-native speakers and linguistic minorities face compounded disadvantages arising from limited proficiency in the language of the interview, cultural unfamiliarity with police procedures, and the frequent absence of qualified interpretation. Indigenous populations may face additional challenges rooted in historical relationships with state authority, community-based norms around truth-telling, and culturally distinct communication practices [82]. Each of these groups requires tailored safeguards that go beyond generic procedural protections, and interviewers must be equipped to recognize vulnerability indicators across their varied presentations.

Robust legal requirements for safeguarding vulnerable groups are well established in Western systems, particularly in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, where provisions include the presence of legal counsel, the use of qualified interpreters for foreign language speakers, and the presence of an appropriate adult for children [81, 82]. However, in many other regions, such requirements are validated less frequently and not consistently executed. Studies in China demonstrate that safeguards for vulnerable suspects and juveniles are inconsistently administered despite explicit legal requirements [88]. In Latin America, systematic guidance for interviewing vulnerable suspects remains limited, with practice largely shaped by local cultural norms rather than codified legal protections [45]. In some regions of Africa, a lack of resources and specialized training has resulted in inadequate safeguards for vulnerable populations during interrogation [75, 72].

Cultural factors further shape how vulnerability is perceived and responded to. In some collectivistic cultures, children may be expected to defer to authority, making them more susceptible to compliance when questioned [73, 74]. In individualistic societies where mental health conditions are more openly recognized, interviewers may nonetheless fail to identify psychological impairments during questioning, frequently resulting in inappropriate questioning techniques or an absence of necessary safeguards [75].

Linguistic constraints highlight another critical cross-cultural challenge. In multilingual communities and cross-cultural interrogation settings, interpreters play a vital role in ensuring proper communication. As discussed in the preceding section on cultural influences, studies demonstrate that untrained or inadequate interpreters, including police personnel or family members serving in this role, are sometimes used during questioning, compromising both the accuracy of evidence and the impartiality of proceedings [77].

Training for the interviewing of vulnerable and minority populations varies considerably: some countries incorporate

mental health awareness, developmental psychology, and cultural competence into police training, while others emphasise procedural adherence without attention to vulnerability indicators [77]. This distinction in training practice reflects deeper systemic priorities: whether the institutional focus is on securing convictions or on ensuring just treatment for all individuals, regardless of their vulnerabilities. The role of appropriate adults, legal representatives, trained interpreters, forensic mental health professionals, and culturally competent interviewers is critical in bridging the gap between formal protections and their practical application [47, 73, 74, 77].

Effective and ethical questioning of vulnerable individuals requires a careful balance of legal protection, interviewer sensitivity, and culturally appropriate awareness of both prominent and subtle vulnerability indicators. As demonstrated by the Méndez Principles on Effective Interviewing, a rights-based, non-coercive, and culturally inclusive approach to interrogation provides the most principled framework for this purpose [6].

9. Theme 7: Cultural Perspectives on Confession, Truth, and Deception

Interrogation techniques are inevitably shaped by culturally specific values and beliefs about deception, truth-telling, and the significance of confession. Cross-cultural psychology has consistently cautioned against the universal application of Western theories and assumptions about verbal and nonverbal cues to deception [79]. For example, in many individualistic cultures, direct eye contact is associated with sincerity and transparency, whereas in some collectivistic settings (documented in studies conducted in East Asian, Middle Eastern, and Indigenous community contexts), avoiding direct eye contact may function as a sign of respect rather than concealment, though considerable variation exists within each of these contexts [80]. These patterns should not be interpreted as uniform properties of any tradition or population. The term ‘collective mystic cultures’ used in an earlier version of this manuscript has been removed and replaced with more precise terminology, as it lacks academic grounding and risks perpetuating cultural essentialism. All cultural generalizations in this section are qualified by reference to specific empirical sources and should not be read as uniform descriptions of any population or region.

Interrogators unfamiliar with these differences risk misinterpreting culturally normative verbal and nonverbal behaviour as indicators of deception or guilt. Perceptions of confession also differ across cultural contexts. In many legal systems, including Western adversarial systems, a confession by the suspect is treated as a definitive acknowledgement of guilt. However, some studies conducted in specific East Asian, Middle Eastern, and North African legal and social contexts have documented that in settings shaped by honor-shame dynamics, a confession may sometimes serve to restore social harmony or protect the community’s reputation, irrespective of factual

guilt [1, 80]. These findings reflect context-dependent patterns and should not be generalised to all societies within these broad regions. Such dynamics can contribute to elevated rates of voluntary false confessions in collectivistic settings, particularly where individuals seek to protect family members or communal reputation.

In some specific indigenous community contexts documented in the criminological literature, community-based social norms and agreement methods have been found to shape how reality is perceived and expressed [82]. In such contexts, truth may be understood not only as correspondence to facts but also as a function of narrative consistency and its role in sustaining social cohesion. It should be noted that indigenous communities are highly diverse, and these observations reflect particular documented settings rather than universal indigenous experience. Interviewing approaches must therefore be adapted not only to ensure linguistic and procedural fairness, but also to accommodate culturally specific truth-telling dynamics. International training frameworks promoted by the Méndez Principles have explicitly recognized that universally applicable lie detection is a myth, and have begun to encourage cross-cultural reliability and culturally informed approaches to assessing communication [6, 83, 84]. Failure to engage with these cultural dimensions risks undermining both public trust in law enforcement and the broader pursuit of justice.

10. Summary Table

Table 1 provides a synthesised overview of the seven themes addressed in this review, mapping each onto key jurisdictions, dominant cultural variables, prevailing interrogation practices, major risks, and implications for training and policy. This table is intended to assist readers in navigating the comparative structure of the review and in identifying areas requiring further cross-national empirical research.

11. Conclusions

This narrative review has examined cross-cultural similarities and differences in the interrogation and investigative interviewing of criminal suspects across seven thematic domains. Several convergent patterns can be identified across the literature. There is a discernible global movement, accelerated by the 2021 Méndez Principles and the spread of the PEACE model, away from coercive, confession-oriented interrogation and towards evidence-based, rapport-centred, and human rights-grounded investigative interviewing. Planning, cognitive interviewing, and rapport-building are increasingly recognized as internationally valid best practices. Their application, however, remains profoundly uneven, reflecting the intersection of legal tradition, institutional culture, resource availability, and deeply embedded cultural norms.

The theoretical contribution of this review lies in its synthe-

sis of cultural, legal, and psychological perspectives on suspect interviewing across a wide range of jurisdictions, including under-studied contexts in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. By synthesising empirical studies, field reports, legal analyses, and international guidelines, the review offers a framework for understanding how the same interviewing technique may produce markedly different outcomes depending on the cultural and institutional context in which it is applied.

The practical and policy implications of this review are substantial. Training systems that transfer models without cultural adaptation risk producing interviewers who are technically proficient but culturally incompetent. Human rights safeguards that exist in law but not in practice leave the most vulnerable suspects, namely children, persons with mental illness, linguistic minorities, and indigenous populations, without adequate protection. A global standard for investigative interviewing that fails to account for the cultural specificity of truth-telling, deception cues, and the meaning of confession is neither operationally reliable nor ethically defensible.

Several limitations of this review should be explicitly acknowledged. First, because this is a narrative rather than a systematic review, the search and selection process is subject to the authors' judgment and may not capture all relevant literature. Second, the availability of empirical data is highly uneven across jurisdictions: the literature on the United Kingdom, United States, and Scandinavia is substantially richer than that on Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. Third, the use of broad cultural categories, while inevitable at a review level, risks overgeneralisation; the reader is advised to treat regional characterisations as heuristic rather than definitive. Fourth, the review draws on sources published between 2000 and 2025, and developments subsequent to this period are not captured.

Future research should prioritise cross-national empirical studies that extend beyond single-jurisdiction designs, investigate how cultural variables moderate the effectiveness of specific interviewing techniques, and evaluate the long-term impact of rights-based training initiatives across diverse institutional and cultural contexts. Particular attention should be directed towards developing culturally validated measures of rapport, vulnerability, and truth-telling across diverse populations. The field of cross-cultural investigative interviewing continues to develop, and a stronger empirical foundation is needed to support the global reform aspirations embodied in frameworks such as the Méndez Principles.

Statement of the Use of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Writing Process

An AI language assistant (Claude, Anthropic) was used during the preparation of this manuscript to assist with language editing and formatting of the reference list. The tool was not used to generate original research content, analyse data, or produce the underlying scholarly arguments. All intellectual content and conclusions remain the sole responsibility of the authors, who reviewed and approved all AI-assisted edits.

Author Contributions

Aliya Sarwar: Conceptualization, Data Curation, Investigation, Methodology, Writing - original draft, Writing - review & editing

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Data Availability Statement

This manuscript is a narrative review of published literature. No primary data were collected or generated during this study. The sources reviewed are publicly available published works cited in the reference list. Data sharing is therefore not applicable to this article.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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