The role of faulty inferences in interrogation dialogues
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Interrogation is used in law enforcement and security contexts, ostensibly to 'get to the truth' via confession. However contemporary accounts of cases in which interrogation has lead to confession, but failed to discover the truth, suggests that certain interrogation techniques, such as the Reid technique, might actually be based upon wrong assumptions. These assumptions and the faulty inferences that follow from them have lead to real world instances of pathological dialogues.

There are a variety of standard interrogation models which are used to 'educe' information from suspects, using the parlance of modern security operatives. The most prevalent throughout the twentieth century has been the Reid approach. Recent legal cases have uncovered miscarriages of justice that are rooted in the (mis-)application of the Reid approach. Within law enforcement, there is some debate over whether it is the technique itself that is at fault or specific applications of the technique. In the worst-case scenario, these legal cases suggest that modern interrogation techniques have roots that reach directly back to the 'third degree', and arguably as far as Torquemada, and that the lessons of those contexts have not been learnt.

Often, (mis-)application of the Reid approach means that the goal of the interrogator has become to gain a confession rather than to discover the truth. This is predicated on two bad assumptions; firstly, that the person under interrogation wouldn't be there if they didn't deserve to be there, and secondly, that nobody will ever confess to something that they are innocent of. This leads to a particular set of bad dialogues that we term `pathological dialogues' in which the interrogator compulsively pursues a confession, potentially at the expense of the truth. This provides an opportunity to study faulty inferences that have had real, lasting, bad effects on the lives of otherwise innocent people.

More recently, the limitations of the Reid approach have been recognised in some quarters and have lead to the development of alternatives, such as the PEACE model. This gives an opportunity to compare and contrast two known interrogative models and to study the resultant dialogues that follow from each approach.

This work has impact on our understanding of how to conduct interrogations, insight into constructive and non-constructive approaches to knowledge elicitation and the co-construction of defeasible knowledge [1], as well as increasing awareness of pathological dialogues and faulty inferences.

In summation, we report on the construction of dialectical models [2] of the Reid approach and PEACE model which have been used to explore the inferential structures that are co-constructed during dialogues. The aim is to gain insight into the dialogues that occur in the presence of power imbalances between the locutors and to study the valid and invalid inferences that follow from the application of these models.

[1] C. Reed, J. Devereux, S. Wells, & G. Rowe, (2008), "AIF+: Dialogue in the Argument Interchange Format", in In A. Hunter (editor): Computational Models of Argument, Proceedings of the Second International Conference on Computational Models of Argument (COMMA 2008). Toulouse, France.
[2] S. Wells and C. Reed, (2012), "A Domain Specific Language for Describing Diverse Systems of Dialogue", (2012), in Journal of Applied Logic, vol. 10 (4), pp. 309–329.