Quantifying The Effectiveness Of An Evidence-Based Rapport-Building Training Programme For Use In Information-Gathering Contexts

FULL REPORT
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This report details the key findings of work conducted by the CREST commissioned project Quantifying The Effectiveness Of An Evidence-Based Rapport-Building Training Programme. You can view all the outputs from this project at: crestresearch.ac.uk/projects/evidence-based-rapport-building-training-programme/

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While there is no shared definition of the word ‘rapport’ in the research literature, there is general agreement that markers of rapport include behaviours such as relaxed body language, attentiveness, similar communication styles, empathy, shared interests, and mutual respect. These features are observed when people interact with people they trust and can be applied within an interaction to build trust and rapport.

Findings from psychological research suggest that developing rapport facilitates communication and information elicitation. Furthermore, interviewers who can build rapport within an information gathering context have been found to elicit significantly more detailed and accurate memory reports from witnesses, suspects, and intelligence-gathering exercises.

These findings promote the value of training practitioners in techniques to build rapport. However, turning to the existing research to inform a rapport training programme reveals challenges within the available evidence-base:

1. Definitions of rapport as a construct are somewhat vague and divergent
2. A range of experimental manipulations have been used to examine the effects of building rapport
3. A similar range of disparate frameworks is in place for measuring rapport.

Such a lack of consensus in how rapport has been defined, manipulated, and measured, creates clear challenges associated with developing effective evidence-based guidelines relating to training and measuring rapport.

In response to the promising yet confusing landscape, this project aimed to:

- identify studies that have manipulated and/or measured rapport within an information-gathering context
- map the existing literature on the use of rapport-building as a tool to facilitate disclosure within an information-gathering context
- use the findings to develop an evidence-based training programme to test the extent to which individuals can be trained to better build rapport.

### IDENTIFYING RELEVANT STUDIES

In October 2017, five electronic databases were searched to identify studies manipulating and/or measuring rapport within an information gathering context. Studies that had been published or accepted for publication, and grey literature (unpublished manuscripts and conference proceedings, brief reports, dissertations and theses), were acceptable providing they met predetermined inclusion criteria. To encompass the different ways rapport has been defined, we also included studies that had manipulated and measured similar concepts to rapport (empathy and trust).

Our initial search yielded over 6,500 hits from databases. Hand-searching and author-searching yielded a further 11 hits and unpublished/grey-articles supplied by authors in the field yielded a further 27. After removing duplicates, we were left with approximately 4,700 articles for title and abstract screening, of these 281 studies were identified for full-text screening. The final number of studies meeting our inclusion criteria was 53. For each of these selected studies:
- manipulations of rapport were coded in categories (e.g. verbal, non-verbal facial, non-verbal body, para-verbal)
- measures of rapport (and/or its synonyms) were recorded
- information elicitation was categorised in relation to amount and accuracy.

**MAPPING THE EVIDENCE-BASE**

Given the growing interest in this area of research and findings that largely point towards positive outcomes associated with building rapport in an information-gathering context, it is timely to systematically map the relevant research to provide a much-needed overview of the current knowledge-base.

Systematic mapping of research on a particular topic allows for transparent and comprehensive evidence collation, visual presentation, and synthesis, which in turn provides an objective picture of the current state of knowledge.

We used this methodology to examine, compare, and contrast different methods used by researchers to manipulate and measure rapport within an information-gathering context. Key variables relating to the rapport-behaviours that have been manipulated or observed, and outcome variables such as the type of information disclosure, are presented in an Evidence and Gap Map. This simple method of mapping the relevant literature is effective in identifying relative areas of concentration and inattention. For example, whether attention has focused on building rapport with adults more so than with children, or whether more studies utilise verbal techniques to build rapport relative to non-verbal techniques.

The Evidence and Gap Map can be used as a matrix to see how many studies have featured particular variables of interest; the numbers in each cell represent the number of studies available (clicking on a cell links to a separate tab that lists the corresponding references). The deeper shading of a cell also illustrates the amount of research attention but in a more graphic way, with darker shading indicating a higher volume of studies (see Figure 1 for a partial screenshot of the map).

In addition to the Evidence and Gap Map, a broader range of study characteristics are presented in a Searchable Systematic Map to allow for a more detailed presentation of the existing evidence base. This is a method of cataloguing study attributes, such as

![Figure 1. Partial screenshot of the Evidence and Gap Map.](image-url)
methodologies, independent and dependent variables, and different areas of study focus (see James, Randall, & Haddaway, 2016).

Taking this approach, it is possible to effectively map the breadth and depth of relevant literature and, thus, facilitate the identification of knowledge-clusters, as well as areas within the literature base that have been neglected. Using this methodology, it is also possible to examine, compare, and contrast different methods used by researchers to manipulate and measure variables of interest. See Figure 2 for a partial screenshot of the Searchable Systematic Map.

The Evidence and Gap Map and Searchable Systematic Map are available to view online. The online version of the maps contain data from 35 studies only (data pertaining to children has been excluded).

SYNTHESISING THE OUTCOMES OF THE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Systematic maps can provide the foundations to support the conduct of a thorough review of the literature. Drawing upon the Searchable Systematic Map it is possible to examine the rapport behaviours that were manipulated and/or measured by the researchers. It is immediately apparent that there is no consistency between studies; each research team has focused on a different rapport behaviour or combination of rapport behaviours. Furthermore, where the rapport condition features interviewers employing a combination of behaviours, it is not possible to determine which (if any) is the most effective.

It was, therefore, important to take a step back from examining which verbal, non-verbal, or para-verbal has featured in each study, and instead consider the intention of the chosen behaviour. Here, it was possible to differentiate between (and re-categorise) different rapport behaviours according to whether the underlying goal was to (a) personalise the interview, (b) present an approachable demeanour, or (c) demonstrate attentiveness.

For example, while self-disclosure and the use of empathy are both verbal rapport behaviours, the underlying goal is to personalise the interview and demonstrate attentiveness, respectively. Similarly, while open body posture and head-nodding are both non-verbal rapport behaviours, they can be re-categorised as presenting an approachable demeanour and demonstrating attentiveness, respectively in accordance with the underlying goal. We used this conception of rapport in the empirical phase of our project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FULL REFERENCE</th>
<th>USE OF NAME</th>
<th>SELF-DISCLOSURE</th>
<th>SHOW PERSONAL INTEREST</th>
<th>ACTIVE LISTENING</th>
<th>USE OF EMPATHY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 2. Partial screenshot of the Searchable Systematic Map.
The final aim of the project was to draw on the results of the Study Space Analysis to develop and pilot an evidence-based rapport-building training programme within the context of information-gathering interviews with compliant mock-witnesses.

Research suggests that there might be individual differences in naturally-occurring levels of rapport-building skill; however, it also suggests that these behaviours can be understood, taught, and intentionally used in an interaction to generate rapport to facilitate trust and cooperation.

The preliminary analysis focused on whether the positive outcomes associated with rapport-building are supported and the extent to which rapport-building behaviours are trainable. A final analysis aims to establish the individual differences associated with rapport development, both natural and trained.

**INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEW TRAINING PROCEDURE**

All participants in the role of interviewer received two phases of online interview training in a PEACE-compliant initial account investigative interview modelled on the Structured Interview Protocol (SIP©, Gabbert, Hope, McGregor, Ellis, LaRooy, & Milne, in preparation, see Appendix B). For this study, the normally occurring ‘Rapport’ content was removed from the initial training. To manage time, interviewers were instructed to identify three primary ‘topics’ from the initial free recall to probe more fully during the interview.

Interviewers watched a 25-minute video on the objectives of an investigative interview; recommended techniques to use when interviewing; the purposes of open/focused/closed questions; the definition of a topic area; the recommended structure of a best-practice interview; and question hierarchy (see Appendix C for illustrative screenshots).

At the end of the training video, interviewers were also given test questions to ensure successful comprehension. They were allowed to retake the test as many times as they wanted to reach criterion performance.

Upon arrival for Phase 1 of the study and before any experimental interviews, participants received a small-group in-person training recap with one of the experimenters, allowing them to practice techniques imparted in the training video. In each session, the interviewers interviewed another individual and were then interviewed themselves about a recent autobiographical event. Interviewers were trained to use an interview prompt sheet (see Appendix D) to help structure their interview around three topic areas. Feedback was provided by the experimenters.

The second phase of the experiment took place exactly seven days later. Interviewers assigned to the experimental ‘Rapport’ condition undertook a second training programme delivered online. They watched a further 20-minute video outlining and demonstrating evidence-based techniques to develop and maintain rapport, such as personalising the interview, being attentive, and being approachable. At the end of this training video, interviewers were also given test questions to ensure comprehension and again, permitted to retake the test as many times as they wanted.

Upon arrival for Phase 2 of the study and before the interviews began, interviewers received a small-group in-person training recap. Again, this training comprised of verbal, behavioural and para-verbal
rapport-building and maintenance techniques, such as self-disclosure; open body-posture; active listening; empathetic responses; head-nodding; maintaining eye contact; echoing use of witness’ name; and smiling. Feedback was provided by the experimenters and a similar aide-memoire was available to assist in the delivery of the trained behaviours (see Appendix E).

RAPPORT-BUILDING TRAINING PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Based on an examination of the 53 papers identified in the initial review phase of the award, a training programme was developed. The programme comprised behaviours across verbal, non-verbal and paraverbal channels (see Table 1).

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCE MEASURES

All participants completed a battery of individual differences measures. In Phase 1, interviewers were given a questionnaire pack containing: a demographics sheet, Form Y2 (trait anxiety) of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI; Spielberger, Gorsuch, Lushene, Vagg, & Jacobs, 1983), Neuroticism-Extraversion-Openness Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI; Costa & McCrae, 1989; Costa & McCrae, 1992); Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davies, 1980), self-monitoring scale (Snyder, 1974), Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20; Bagby, Parker & Taylor, 1994), and Rotter’s Interpersonal Trust scale (Rotter, 1967).

Before each interview, participants completed the STAI Form Y1 (state anxiety questionnaire). Following each interview, interviewers completed the 18-item interaction rapport checklist (Kieckhaefer, Vallano, Schreiber Compo, 2014) and the STAI Form Y1 (state anxiety questionnaire).

After each interview, witnesses completed Rapport Scales for Interrogations and Investigative Interviews, Interviewee Version Version 3 (RS3i; Duke & Wood, 2017) the 18-item interaction rapport checklist (Kieckhaefer et al., 2014) and the STAI Form Y1 (state anxiety questionnaire).

DESIGN AND PROCEDURE

This study used an asymmetric block round-robin design (see Table 2), where groups of a maximum of four interviewers interviewed a maximum of four witnesses in any given testing session, resulting in a maximum of 16 interviews per testing session. Forty testing sessions took place (20 in each phase).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of the rapport-building training programme</th>
<th>No. of studies</th>
<th>% of studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of preferred name</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of disclosure</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal interest / Reciprocity</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active-listening</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-verbal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness / smiling</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open body language</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye-contact</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head-nodding</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraverbal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone of voice</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Features of the rapport-building training programme
Witnesses viewed up to four pseudo-randomly allocated crime events from a set of eight stimuli events and were interviewed about each shortly after viewing. No witness watched the same crime event twice, and no interviewer interviewed two witnesses about the same crime event.

Interviewers attended two testing sessions, exactly one week apart, while witnesses participated in only one phase of the experiment.

A total of 439 interviews were conducted. The numerical imbalance was due to participant withdrawal.

**INTERVIEW YIELD CODING**

All interviews from Phase 1 and Phase 2 (n=439) were transcribed and coded from transcripts for the amount and accuracy of information yield. Inter-coder reliability was ensured at all stages. Coders assessed units of accurate and inaccurate information recalled.

Information elicited was coded across the following categories: details about people (P), actions (A), setting (S) and objects (O) that were related to the crime event presented in the videos. Person details included any information about what people look like or what they were wearing. Action details included any information on what a person was doing in the crime event. Setting details included information about the background scene, basic geography, as well as the directions of travel of people or vehicles. Object details included inanimate articles that were carried, used, and observed.

To ensure standardisation across all interviews when coding for yield, we only regarded the first three topic areas selected and explored by the interviewer. We did not code for vague details (i.e. he seems like a great guy; she was pretty), time of day, how long an event took, or when witnesses offer their interpretation of a person’s motivation (i.e. it must have happened because…).

**BEHAVIOURAL CODING**

All interviews were video-and audio-recorded and later coded for various behaviours relevant to the training programme (see Appendix F for an

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Witnesses</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
<td>1  2  3  4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X  x  X  x</td>
<td>X  x  x  x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X  x  X  x</td>
<td>X  x  x  x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X  x  X  x</td>
<td>X  x  x  x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Asymmetric block round-robin design schematic
illustrative screen grab of an interview). Behaviours were monitored in both phases of interviews to establish a baseline and to permit the calculation of a change score attributable to training in the second phase. All non-verbal rapport behaviours were coded using the Behavioural Observation Research Interactive Software (BORIS) open-source freeware (Friard & Gamba, 2016). BORIS is a logging system that allows key events in video observations to be coded for frequency, time point, or duration/quality of enduring behaviours where relevant.

The four non-verbal rapport behaviours that interviewers were trained to use included head-nodding, smiling, maintaining eye contact, and presenting and maintaining open upper-body posture. We coded head-nodding and smiling as discrete ‘point’ events, and maintaining eye contact and open upper-body posture ‘states’ of a certain duration.

For head-nodding, we defined one unit of nod as either ‘a single, unitary upwards and/or downward movement of the head’ or ‘a cluster of continuous nods’. Any nods separated by a break of >1 second were quantified as a separate unit.

Smiling was coded as frequency counts, in other words, the number of times the interviewer smiled during the interview. A smile was defined as a lift of the cheek muscles.

Eye-contact was coded as the duration of time the interviewer gazes at the witness during the interview. Since we are only interested in the interviewers implementing behaviours in the training programme, we coded eye contact even when the witness looks away when the interviewer maintains eye gaze.

Finally, upper-body posture was coded as the duration of time interviewers sat without crossing their arms (or any position that creates a barrier) across their upper torso and face.

After considering how previous researchers coded for these behaviours (see Table 2), we constructed a dichotomous coding protocol for ‘conversational tone of voice’ and rated the interviewers’ tone and flow. A ‘poor tone’ was attributed to interviewers who were monotonous, impatient, and/or abrupt, and a ‘good tone’ was attributed to interviewers who were calm, reassuring, friendly, and/or gentle. A ‘poor flow’ characterised interviews in which conversation was stilted, protracted or laborious, while a ‘good flow’ characterised interviews that were carried out at a comfortable speed and where conversation appeared to flow naturally.

Verbal rapport techniques were coded using transcripts for interviewer’s use of own name; interviewer asking the witness’ name; clarification of witness’ name; use of witness’ name throughout the interview; echoing (i.e. “You said that there was a man who came out of the store?”); self-disclosure (i.e. “I’m not very good with driving directions, can you tell me again how…?”); positive feedback (i.e. “You’re doing very well, thanks for all this information so far”); encourager (i.e., backchannels responses such as “uh-huh”, “mm-hmm”, “okay”); and empathetic responses (“That must’ve been horrible to watch”).

All of these techniques were coded using frequency counts.

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

The empirical study comprised two phases of interviews numbering 439 in total (Phase 1 n=219, Duration $M=7.17$ minutes, $SD=2.89$; Phase 2 n=220, Duration $M=6.27$, $SD=2.66$).

The first phase was the baseline phase, where interviewers performed several interviews to establish naturally occurring levels of performance and behaviours of interest. The second phase of interviews came after rapport-training (or control) and served to measure the effect of training and the downstream effect of rapport on information yield.
Sixty interviewers (41 experimental/19 control, Age $M=30.00$, $SD=9.87$) interacted with a total of 146 mock witnesses across the two phases of the experiment (Phase 1 $n=72$; Phase 2 $n=74$, Age P1 $M=29.97$, $SD=14.02$, Age P2 $M=28.99$, $SD=10.67$).

**PRELIMINARY RESULTS**

Results indicated a significant improvement in information yield from Phase 1 to Phase 2 across all participants (Phase $F(1,58)=5.985$, $p=.017$). Although results trended in the predicted direction, there was no significant interaction to suggest that the Rapport training significantly improved investigative interview yield (Phase*Condition $F(1,58)=.101$, $p=.752$, n.s.).

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**ARE RAPPORT-BUILDING BEHAVIOURS TRAINABLE?**

Tables 3, 4, and 5 present information relating to the ‘trainability’ of various aspects of the rapport-building training programme by comparing within-subject change scores pre- and post-rapport building training (or control).

As can be seen in Table 3, changes in personalisation of the interview appear to be consistently well-implemented, with all aspects of this part of the training programme being significantly improved in the experimental group. Table 4 clearly illustrates that only a reduction in Closed Body Posture was effectively trained. Table 5 shows that the ‘be attentive’ features...
were not trained to a significantly different degree in the current experiment.

PERCEIVED RATINGS OF RAPPORT

A multivariate Mixed ANOVA on RS3I measures of rapport across phases of data collection and comparing experimental and control conditions indicated a significant main effect of a phase, driven by an increase in ‘Connected Flow’ (Duke et al., 2018). In summary, all participants increased in perceived rapport development, but there were no differences between experimental and control groups.

This finding is of limited reliability at this point and will be further examined in due course.

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES CORRELATIONS WITH RAPPORT PERCEPTION DIFFERENCES

A preliminary analysis reveals no broad correlations between any of the individual difference measures that were recorded and perceptions of rapport collected following either phase of interviews, or when considering the change from pre-post rapport training. This is not entirely surprising given the sample size, the likely modest effect sizes of individual difference effects, and the correction necessary for multiple comparisons.

Ongoing analysis for the empirical paper will explore this issue in more detail using linear mixed-effects modelling to better partial out random effect variance.
Example of recruitment poster

TRAIN AS AN INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEWER

The Forensic Psychology Unit are conducting a study to test new investigative interview training techniques, and WE NEED YOU.

INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEWERS WHAT’S INVOLVED?

Two separate testing sessions, one week apart, each lasting 2.5 hours. Weekend, and evening slots available.

It is vitally important that you attend BOTH sessions.

Your will interview a number of eyewitnesses about crimes they have seen. Full training will be provided.

WHAT DO I GET IN RETURN?

- CV-able investigative interview skills training to UK policing standards
- Feedback on your interview performance
- £30 in cash
- Free coffee and cookies during the testing

Take on the role of either investigative interviewer, or eyewitnesses/interviewee trained to UK Police standards.

EYEWITNESS / INTERVIEWEES WHAT’S INVOLVED?

A single testing session lasting approx. 2.5 hours. Weekend, and evening slots available.

Your will watch and be interviewed about a number of different crimes.

WHAT DO I GET IN RETURN?

- CV-able investigative interview skills training to UK policing standards (Given at a later date)
- Test your skills as an eyewitness!
- £10 in cash
- Free coffee and cookies during the testing

Investigative interview training will be offered free-of-charge to anyone who is interested, regardless of which role you take.

TO REGISTER, PLEASE EMAIL

FPU@gold.ac.uk

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
Structured Interview Protocol

The aim of this aide memoir is to support front line officers to elicit information from witnesses via simple and effective evidence-based guidelines.

Use of the SIP will increase the efficiency of obtaining evidence and enhance the quality of evidence obtained.
APPENDIX C

Illustrative screengrabs of interview training part 1

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**Summary of the different question types**

In summary, you’ve learned about three main types of questions:

1. Open (TEI) questions that will encourage your witness to provide you with a lot of information;
2. Focused (P-Wh) questions that will enable you to ask for more specific information about some of the topics they’ve mentioned (for example, what the perpetrator was wearing);
3. Closed questions for fact checking and clarifying information.

Now that you’re familiar with these different question types, the trick is how to use them the right way!
APPENDIX D
Interview prompt sheet (Phase 1) and aide-memoire

Your badge number: ______________ Date: ______________
Your partner’s badge number: ______________ Time: practice session

The following script and aide memoir should help you structure your interviews

Hello, my name’s ___________. I’m aware you have just arrived here, I’d like to ask you some questions about what you can remember about your journey. It’s important that I understand as much as possible about this what happened, who you encountered, and who did what. Are you ready to start? Okay then, in your own words and in as much detail as possible please tell me what happened.

As your witness starts to talk, listen out for and write down topic areas that you think are important to know about in more detail. (No need to write down more information as all interviews are being recorded).

List topics here

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

Once your witness has finished telling you what happened, choose one topic from your list that you’d like to find out more information about. Refer to your aide-memoir to remind you how to use the question hierarchy (open to closed questions) to get as much information as possible.
Your badge number: ______________  Date: ______________
Your partner's badge number: ______________  Time: practice session

How did your interviewer do?

Please pay attention to how your interviewer is doing, and tick all that apply in the table below -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did your interviewer...</th>
<th>YES!</th>
<th>NO!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Introduce themselves</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Start by saying &quot;Tell me everything&quot; (or similar)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Write down sensible topic areas based on what you said</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(check this)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Select a single topic area to ask you for more information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>about</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Ask for more information with an open question to start</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Use the question hierarchy to get more information from you</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*We'll discuss this with you and your partner you once you've all had a go at practicing an interview*
APPENDIX E

Effectiveness Of Rapport-Building Training Programme

Aide-Memoire for initial interview training and Rapport Training components

**INTERVIEW PROMPTS**

**PERSONALISE THE INTERVIEW**
- Use of preferred name
- Self-disclosure / reciprocity

**BE APPROACHABLE**
- Smile
- Conversational tone of voice
- Open body posture

**BE ATTENTIVE**
- Eye-contact
- Head-nodding
- Active-listening
- Empathy
APPENDIX F

Interview screen grab video recording
For more information on CREST and other CREST resources, visit

www.crestresearch.ac.uk