

# Police and Personality

**A quantitative study  
on investigative interviewing  
competences and management**

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# The dissertation

The police force can be perceived as an organisation responsible for the safety and protection of citizens, employing a large number of police detectives who are responsible for criminal investigations in general and investigative interviewing of suspects in particular. Research on investigative interviewing is a specialized scientific area and has had (and continues to have) a great deal of influence with regard to interviewing policy and practice throughout the world (iIIRG, 2007). The police interview is one of the most important investigative tools that law enforcement has at hand and as a result of this scientific research, police interview methods have changed during the twentieth century (Holmberg, 2004). Despite recent training initiatives Informing personnel of developments in interviewing techniques, which could be described as an emphatic information-gathering interview style, a coercive and accusatory approach to interviewing can be however still be conflictingly observed during daily police practices.

As the latter way of interviewing can hypothetically be attributed to the quality of training programmes in investigative interviewing, a shift within scientific investigative interviewing themes can be observed. There have been a number of recent studies which empirically evaluate police interview training techniques. This dissertation aims to develop this evaluation base, by drawing on the author's interest in police, personality and competency management and the effect of these for training investigative interviewing purposes.

In particular this dissertation will look at current and future possibilities for competency management and training of individual interview competences, particularly within criminal investigation services and police investigative interviews. It assumes that personal coaching approaches within private organisations and companies would be applied. However, we are not convinced that this style of coaching of interpersonal interview competences used by the private sector can be unconditionally utilised within the police organisation because of the unpredictable environment and the heavy workload of criminal investigators. Also, the atypical nature of the police culture, as described by other authors (Chan, 2008; Powell, Fisher & Wright, 2005) suggests that it might not conform to a set of norms, values, observed conventions, etc. which apply to other types of business environment. We therefore wish to look at competency management at both job and interpersonal level in the context of the Belgian police criminal investigation departments and more particularly in the context of the police investigative interviewing practices of six Belgian police detective forces both organised at a local and federal level. Therefore this study is unique as no former studies have ever empirically tested the learning effect of applying competency management and coaching as we know it from the world of trade and industry to a police interview training context.

The main research goal of this dissertation therefore, was to study interpersonal



investigative interviewing competences in order to apply this knowledge to assessment and training of police investigative interviewers. In addition, this study developed two new training procedures: an *ongoing individual coaching* versus a *one-day peer group* with the aim of improving the quality of daily police investigative interviews. Subsequently the learning effects of these two newly developed interpersonal trainings were experimentally studied by implementing these training procedures at real life daily criminal investigation practices.

A pre and post coaching design with different types of evaluators was used as we collected self, peer, coach and suspect ratings before and after the training interventions. The interviewing skills of 63 officers were assessed and defined pre and post the individual coaching with the help of the peer group training, consisting of: (i) a role-played interview; (ii) the Police Interviewing Competency Inventory; and, (iii) a 360 degree feedback procedure. Following this, 32 of the participating officers received custom-made individual coaching for seven months.

### **Research objectives**

In order to assess the efficacy of the two newly developed training methods, three empirical research phases were identified, and where they overlapped, a fourth phase was conducted concurrently, and in the background: (I) the initial preparatory phase tested the validity of the test instrument, the Police Interview Competency Inventory (PICI), (II) the second research phase assessed the feasibility and practicality of the new training initiative in practice, and elicited the opinions of the interviewers regarding these training methods; and finally (III) a third experimental phase with the objective of analysing the effectiveness of both training procedures, during which the PICI's potential was investigated. (IV) The fourth phase did not involve an empirical subject of this study, but was nevertheless essential to the organisation of the training methods. As will be discussed briefly in chapter 4, during this phase of the research we focussed on the training of internal coaches (as opposed to external interview experts), with regard to coaching techniques. The training programme that was developed for the coaches, and its application in practice, represent the fourth research phase.

(I) As we planned to use the PICI not only as an assessment tool, but also as an development tool to support both training procedures in general and to create and structure the coaching sessions in particular, we studied the PICI measurement tool comprehensively by building upon the original study of De Fruyt, Bockstaele, Taris and Van Hiel (2006) regarding interview competences. In order to address the question of how we can identify specific interpersonal interview competences, and how we can measure these, the reliability and validity of the PICI was the focus of

this preparatory phase of the research. As a consequence, we defined the following research hypothesis regarding the validity of the instrument

**Hypothesis 1:** The nomological interview competency network as defined by the Police Interviewing Competency Inventory comprises five sub-scales and accompanying interview items and is capable of profiling interview competences quantitatively.

As noted by the original study of De Fruyt et al. (2006), the PICI is a promising tool that quantitatively analyses interviewer competences. The ability to measure the interview competences of interviewers is essential if we wish to empirically study the effect of the training and the further development of these competences. After all, we need to be able to demonstrate whether interviewers have undergone any development in terms of the coached competences. For this we need to know with sufficient certainty whether the five dimensional PICI constructs and accompanying items, in other words the nomological network of interview competences, are in actual fact capable of bringing to light empirically an indefinite number of possible interpersonal interviewer profiles. Gaining insight into the PICI constructs through studying how these various interview items relate to each other is an important step in studying the validity of the measuring instrument. On the basis of the personality theory upon which the PICI concept is based, we will study whether the PICI encompasses all the interview competences and interrelationships that the nomological interviewing network presumes it does.

Moreover, in a later research phase, which focuses on the actual coaching experiment itself, we will once again concentrate on the PICI and its potential as an assessment tool. The experimental pre and post research design, and the use of 360° feedback methodology, enable us not only to gather a lot of feedback about specific interviewer behaviour, they also allow us to gather feedback from various evaluators. Given that the PICI until now as only be used as a self-assessment tool, we will also pay attention to the inter-rater reliability of this measuring instrument and its validity as a predictive instrument.

Gathering feedback from various people is an educative method. Feedback from several sources is easier to accept and analyse, particularly when it is given a coherent form. Moreover, accumulating various PICI scores from several evaluators, all assessing the same individual, produces information which can enable opinions to be formed about the reliability of the instrument in general, and inter-rater reliability in particular. If the instrument is used by several evaluators with various backgrounds (interviewers, experts and laymen) it should still measure what it claims to measure, namely interview competences. The following hypothesis was therefore formulated.

**Hypothesis 2:** The information gathered using PICI self-assessments and PICI assessments of others provides similar information (inter-rater reliability).

- (II) In order to successfully organise the two training procedures which were developed, a second research phase was organised. Since the interviewers must be prepared to undergo personal development, the intrinsic motivation and commitment of the interviewers -two basic principles of coaching that must be present and could influence the training effect- were evaluated. How investigative interviewers responded to the idea of personal coaching, and if the introduction of such training in practice is achievable were also studied.

**Hypothesis 3:** Investigative interviewers are prepared to engage in prolonged supervision with a personal coach to ensure the optimisation of interpersonal interview competences whereby they need to reflect on performances and capabilities.

- (III) The third research phase focuses on the efficacy of both training programmes and empirically studies the learning impact of the coaching methods that were developed specifically for this study. To investigate whether the training programme improves interpersonal competency, the following hypotheses were defined:

**Hypothesis 4:** Monthly feedback of police interviewers in a one to one setting with a personal coach will lead to insight in individual interview competency level, and this will lead to improvement in interviewers' professional interview competency behaviour. In other words, personal coaching of interviewers will improve their PICI interviewing competency level.

**Hypothesis 5:** Individually coaching interviewers is more efficient than a one-day peer group feedback sessions and will improve interviewers' personal PICI competency level more than a one-day training session with peers.

- (IV) A third training procedure was specially designed to coach internal police interviewing experts on their coaching techniques used to coach their peers. Accordingly this training merely had an instrumental purpose. In the scope of the present study here no related research questions were therefore formulated.

In sum, the present study has the potential to gain insight into how professional interviewing is related to the competency level of the interviewers. It therefore offers insight into ways to reduce the pervasiveness of poor interview behaviour by using personal training. If the results of this study are noteworthy, the personal and or in group coaching of interview competences will become an essential training factor.

## The focus of the study

This dissertation is the result of two research projects (cfr. studying the PICI versus new training opportunities) structured by four research phases reported in three separate papers. Modified versions of these papers have been published or re-submitted after a review procedure to various international criminology related journals. The structure of the dissertation and the following papers specify the general research approach at it has been outlined in practice and accompanying sequence of the four sub-studies.

The first chapter, *Investigative interviewing and training*, reports the outcome of a literature review regarding police investigative interviewing and training. This literature review served as an empirical background on which the content of the two new coaching methods have been conducted. The review shows that interviewers are not infallible, and that they must adequately and appropriately adapt to each possible interview situation. Therefore, it is hypothetically of high importance that investigative interviewers know their own strengths and weaknesses. Identifying interpersonal interview skills and personal competences relating to an educational training context is therefore first further studied.

Building upon the theoretical framework used by De Fruyt et al. (2006) study, the second chapter, *Police and personality*, describes the theoretical backdrop, introduces competency management, interpersonal competences and personality, and describes why an awareness of interpersonal differences among interviewers must be taken into account when training them. This chapter also introduces the PICI measurement tool of De Fruyt et al. (2006).

Although in recent years, profiling suspects has been common within the police practice, it is also conversely interesting to profile policemen in order to carry out efficient interviews (Ponsaers, 2002). Although before we can make investigative interviewers aware of their personal strengths and weaknesses or their personal interview competences, we need to understand these interview competences. Knowing one's personal competences can be useful, not only for training purposes, but also in respect of Police practices, so that as a consequence an interviewer or a team of interviewers can be thoughtfully selected (De Fruyt et al., 2006).

Chapter three represents a modified version of the first paper and discusses the results of the preliminary research phase. It devotes particular attention to the redefinition of interview competences as defined by De Fruyt et al. (2006). While coaching of interview competences mainly takes place at the personal level of competency management, it aims to further develop job-related competences. Prior to the development of interview competences, a definition of the most relevant skills or competences related

to the interviewing task must therefore be defined correctly. Accordingly, competency management can be seen as a process in which different stages need to be completed successfully, in chronological order. If this does not happen, the subsequent coaching or assessment, development and evaluation of the interview competences will not achieve the desired result. Prior to training the interviewers, we therefore needed to know the nature and status of their individual skill and how they could be measured effectively.

In order to measure interpersonal interview competences quantitatively, De Fruyt et al. (2006) constructed the PICI. The first research project builds on these previous results as a replication study was carried out to test the reliability and validity of the PICI. The results of this study and its theoretical foundation are discussed comprehensively in the third chapter, *Reliability and Correlational Validity of Police Interview Competences: Assessing the Stability of the Police Interview Competency Inventory*.

Hoekstra and Van Sluijs (2010) argued that behavioural competences could be further developed by formal education and through personal experience, although the level to which this personal growth can manifest itself can be rather limited as it depends on the disposition of the individual. The development of interpersonal interview competences is related to personal characteristics, which no two people share. Therefore a personal training approach would arguably be more efficient for training investigative interviewers than a classic teacher-centred method, where a group of interviewers all need to master the same practices. We therefore wanted to accommodate the personal training needs of the interviewers; the second research project therefore focused on discussing two new training methods that could be applied in a tailor-made manner.

Chapter four, *Coaching investigative interviewing competences*, further discusses and motivates the method used to study the two training procedures. The research sample, the training interventions and the pre and post coaching design are briefly discussed.

Therefore, the second research project relates to the learning impact of personally coaching police interviewers and coaching interviewers in groups. During this second research project we studied different factors assumed to contribute to a positive coaching result: first, commitment of the interviewers to, and their perceptions of, this training procedure; second, the actual learning effects of the coaching procedure itself; and third, the application of the PICI as an assessment tool. The results are reported in the following chapters.

Chapter five represents the second paper published, *The feasibility and practicability of police training: Investigative interviewers' perceptions towards coaching*. In order to personally coach the interviewers, we required them to be self-directed and be able to question their own interview skills so that they could gain greater insight into their own professional

interview behaviour. As self-reflection is not commonly used within police educational practices, this chapter discusses police interviewers' motivation towards the use of such an intensive training method. In the light of police strategies and management, we believe that the way that interviewers perceive this new training opportunity also contributes to the outcome of the training. The results concerning the willingness of the interviewers to reflect on their own performances are discussed.

Chapter six discuss the results of an experimental pre and post coaching examination, the actual effect study. The set-up of this research design allowed us to measure interview behaviour prior and after the two different training interventions, and to measure the learning impact of the training: the individual coaching procedure, in which interviewers were coached by their personal coach for seven months; and the group coaching procedure, in which interviewers experienced a one-day group coaching with their peers. Subsequently this research design allowed us to assess the PICI as an actual training instrument or assessment tool to define personal interviewing strengths and weaknesses. The results are discussed in the third paper: *Training police investigative interviewing competences: The effects of an ongoing individual coaching procedure versus one-day peer group training*.

Final this dissertation will conclude with a summary of the main research findings. Chapter seven, *general discussion* discusses the main conclusions of the research and implications for training, police interviewing practices internationally and formulate recommendations for the organization of Belgian interview training programmes in particular.

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# Chapter 1. Investigative interviewing and training

### 1.1 Interviewing deficiencies

During their quest for the truth police detectives spend approximately 70 to 80% of their time on questioning witnesses, suspects and victims (Kohnken, 1995; Milne & Bull, 1999). The aim of an investigative interview is to obtain reliable, accurate and legally admissible information that will assist the police with their investigation (Gudjonsson, 2002). Consequently, investigative interviewing is an important task in any police investigation (Baldwin, 1993). In fact the police interview is one of the most essential investigative tools that law enforcement has to hand alongside current forensic techniques (Holmberg, 2004; Ponsaers, Mulkers & Stoop, 2001).

Studies of criminal justice systems performed in several countries since the 1980s, however, have demonstrated that unprofessional and fallible interviewing behaviour can lead to incompetent police interviewing of suspects. In extreme cases these inappropriate interviews have led to wrongful convictions (Gudjonsson, 2002; 2003; Bull & Milne, 2004). In the 1970s four men were wrongfully convicted by the English courts. These men, later known as the Guildford Four, were convicted of the pub bombings carried out by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). These four suspects all falsely confessed after they were arrested and interviewed. Although they retracted their confessions, they formed the basis of the case against them. After they had served some time in prison their convictions were declared wrongful on the basis that they rested on inaccurate and coercive police interviewing (Gudjonsson, 2003). Coercive interviewing behaviour has been described as psychological and/or physical pressure and the use of leading, suggestive questions (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992; Williamson, 1993; Milne & Bull, 1999; Holmberg & Christianson, 2002; Gudjonsson, 2003; Bull & Milne, 2004). Even more recently, in 2000, a man was wrongfully convicted of the Schiedam Park murder case in the Netherlands, where in broad daylight two children playing in the park, a ten-year-old girl and an eleven-year-old boy, were lured into the bushes. After they were made to undress, the girl was killed and the boy was stabbed. The initial suspect gave a false confession after frequent and prolonged coercive police investigative interviewing. Later the suspect withdrew his statement and continued denying the facts. The suspect was found guilty and spent four years in prison. As in the case of the Guildford Four, the Dutch Supreme Council later acquitted the suspect (Van Koppen, 2003).

These examples show that unprofessional and incorrect interviewing can have serious consequences. Unprofessional and incorrect interviewing varies from a strongly coercive method of interviewing to less harmful interviewing behaviour that can nevertheless lead to violations of the convention of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Examples of the latter are inappropriate prompting; not using reliable interviewing

methods; long and frequent interviewing without giving the suspect the opportunity to take a break; or interviewing in an unfair and disrespectful way.

In response to this coercive way of interviewing and its detrimental consequences, multidisciplinary investigative interviewing research, mainly carried out in Europe and the UK since the 1980s, has resulted in a knowledge base for interviewing techniques which is strongly focused on obtaining truthful information through the use of non-suggestive and non-coercive interview methods (Fisher & Geiselman, 1992; Williamson, 1993; Milne & Bull, 1999; Holmberg & Christianson, 2002; Gudjonsson, 2003; Bull & Milne, 2004). Although the above examples are the exception rather than the rule, based on these new academic perspectives, information-gathering interview styles are more common now than they were in the past and have replaced coercive interviewing methods in many cases. Information-gathering interview behaviour can be characterized by the interviewer's interest in assembling reliable and relevant information through the use of open, non-leading questions and a humanitarian interview style.

Although investigative interviewing practices have improved internationally thanks to various initiatives of both academics and practitioners in the field, several studies indicate that poor interviewing behaviour, such as using closed and leading questions and lack of proper rapport during daily police practices, is still taking place in the field (Hershkowitz, 1999; Warren, Woodwall, Thomas, Nunno, Keeney & Larson, 1999; Sternberg, Lamb, Davies & Westcott, 2001; Bull & Milne, 2004; Powell, Fisher & Wright, 2005; Westcott, Kynan & Few, 2006; Powell & Wright, 2008; Dando, Wilcock & Milne, 2009). Also a confession is still frequently seen as the crowning glory and consequently the final stage of a police investigation (Beune, 2009). Within a properly conducted investigation, however, a confession should be the start of a new investigative research phase rather than the final stage (Vanderhallen, Matkoski & Vervaecke, 2008). Accordingly, these studies show that investigative interviewers still have room to improve their everyday interview skills.

These results are rather disquieting, since building rapport, which constitutes genuine empathy between the interviewer and the interviewee, increases the likelihood of cooperation by the suspect (Yeschke, 2003). Open questions also encourage prolonged and more accurate answers as they encourage the interviewee to recall available information, which in turn generates more valid and reliable information (Lamb, 1994). Westera, Kebbell and Milne (2010) argue that open questions give less insight into what the interviewer wants to know as they are not accompanied by suggestion. This type of question allows the interviewee to do most of the talking and this is important in eliciting free recall. Free recall is a version of events in the interviewee's own words at the beginning of an interview without intervention by the interviewer (Fisher & Geiselman,

1992). These answers are less likely to be influenced and contaminated. Closed and often also leading questions, however, may reveal information in which the interviewer is particularly interested. As the recalling of memory is vulnerable to error, the answers to such questions can be influenced by the questions themselves (Rassin & Candel, 2010). Even if the interviewee has no straightforward answer to give, he or she will continue to respond. Answers to leading questions are therefore more likely to be inaccurate and thereby increase the likelihood of errors.

Based on the effects of certain interview techniques, such as open questions and building rapport, and in the light of the present research objectives, the following working definition of a suspect investigative interview is defined and will be used and referred to in the current dissertation:

A sound investigative interview reflects a humanitarian interviewing technique in which the interviewer employs an open, receptive attitude to establish a good yet professional relationship with the suspect, so that a professional interaction between the interviewer and the suspect consequently makes it possible, using non-suggestive, open and non-leading questions, to gather legally admissible, reliable and relevant file information.

Powell, Wright and Clark (2009) stated that interviewing deficiencies can be explained in several ways, with a general focus on the importance of adequate training of police investigative interviewers. First, they discussed misunderstandings between trainers and interviewers e.g. misunderstandings arising when discussing relevant interview topics from different perspectives, such as an academic versus a practical point of view. Second, they suggested that job related complications (particularly a heavy workload and not acknowledging that interview specialisation is needed) can lead to poor interview behaviour. Third, they defined unsatisfactory interview training programmes as the main cause of problems with the practicalities of interviews.

This dissertation therefore aims to fill the gap between how daily police investigative interviews of suspects should be conducted and how they are actually been performed. The assumption is that this discrepancy can be attributed to the interviewers in particular and the way multidisciplinary investigative interviewing knowledge has been passed through interviewing training courses within the police detective services in general. This dissertation will discuss the findings of a study examining two newly designed training methods used to coach interpersonal interview competences of investigative interviewers based on experiential learning techniques, at work.

## 1.2 Investigative interviewing training programmes

Since the 1990s, researchers in the field of investigative interviewing have extended the subject of research studies because they have become increasingly concerned about the efficiency of interviewing training programmes in preventing poor interviewing behaviour. Before that time there were no formal guidelines for how police interviewers should conduct an interview. Investigative interviewing training programmes as we know them today were not yet established. Instead, police interviewers were trained in the field mainly by observing an older and more experienced colleague (Yuille, 1986; Bull & Milne, 1999). However, at that time there were no procedures for the transmission of interview expertise and knowledge or for selecting proper role models: anyone would do provided he or she was older, had served for longer and had more experience than recruits. We can however seriously question these selection criteria. What does it mean to be older and more experienced? Investigative interviewing is inherent to the task of criminal investigating. A consequence of this is that the longer someone works as a police detective, the more time they have to build up their experience in interviewing techniques. But does this necessarily mean that a) they have developed the correct interviewing know-how and b) that they are capable of passing on this knowledge properly? These 'trainers' did not necessarily have the appropriate training skills required to teach interview behaviour as defined in the working definition. Yet the transmission of the appropriate know-how from senior colleagues to youngsters is in itself a valuable training technique if provided in a structured and responsible way. If a structured approach to this transmission of knowledge is missing, however, observation of senior colleagues' techniques could merely lead to poor interviewers.

Research results show that even when training procedures were organised, experienced officers still only use the acquired, empirically based, interview techniques (e.g. open questions) sparingly (Williamson, 1993; Aldridge & Cameron, 1999; Warren et al., 1999; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Hershkowitz, Horowitz & Esplin 2000; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin & Mitchell, 2002; Wright & Powell, 2007; Powell, Fisher & Hughes-Scholes, 2008). This is understandable because in our everyday communication we are by nature inclined to pose closed and leading questions, while socio-psychological factors such as defence mechanisms (i.e. rationalising, projecting and minimising) constantly take place subconsciously. Nevertheless, due to the importance of gathering reliable and valuable interviewing information, this cannot be accepted. The role of training and the relation between interview courses and daily interview quality should therefore be evaluated critically.

Stevenson and Leung (1992) argued that a ten-day conceptual training resulted in a

positive impact only with regard to 'easy' interview skills such as making eye contact and adopting an 'open' listening attitude (viz. relaxed and slightly bent forward towards the speaker, arms and legs uncrossed). Essential skills such as avoiding misleading questions, however, failed to materialise. Warren et al. (1999) also concluded that a ten-day training mainly resulted in improved theoretical knowledge and a more positive attitude from the officers. As was the case with the study of Stevenson and Leung (1992), this training's objective was to teach officers the value and aim of specific interviewing skills so that they can interview child witnesses or victims in a successful and reliable way. Accordingly, brief initial trainings appear to be insufficient even when officers are clearly informed about the way human memory works, effective communication, particular interview methods and techniques as well as on the importance to properly exercise these techniques for the sake of reliability. The reason may be that such conceptual and temporal training is not sufficient to enable officers to replace unreliable interview methods (such as using closed and leading questions) with correct and reliable interview skills (for example the use of open and non-suggestive questions).

These results therefore suggest that temporal training on a theoretical level is effective but that structural changes of behaviour fail to occur. What we see is a discrepancy between the conceptual understanding of the purpose and use of the interview techniques and methods on the one hand, and the poor development and adoption of reliable and adequate interview skills in practice on the other (Warren et al., 1999). But how can interview training be organised so that interview behaviour is acquired effectively and used in a structural way?

Several researchers here emphasised the importance of the correct and regular mastering of interview skills (Memon Milne, Holley, Koehnken & Bull, 1994; Warren et al., 1999; Aldridge & Cameron, 1999; Orbach, Hershkowitz, Lamb, Sternberg, Esplin, & Horowitz, 2000; Sternberg et al., 2001; Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin & Mitchell, 2002; Powell, Fisher & Wright, 2005; Williams, Farmer & Manwarring, 2008; Powell, Fisher & Hughes-Scholes, 2008). It appears that apart from the content the system, duration and use of well-defined educational procedures also have an impact. We assume however that the adequate mastering of specific interview skills only would prove to be insufficient and that additional attention for the interpersonal functioning of the interviewer will result in a more substantial learning impact. When training and supervising police interviewers, focussing on their professional interview performances and personal experiences may serve as a frame of reference and can be put to good use during the development process. Becoming aware of one's personal professional functioning is in our opinion an extremely crucial step towards realising a qualitative upgrade of police interview practices.

### 1.3 The finality of a suspect interview and furnishing of proof

Effective interviewing training procedures ensure that interviewers keep making use of the acquired interview techniques even once the training ended. In line with the working definition, a qualitatively 'good' interview is a conversation that, by making use of the acquired interview techniques, results in valuable and reliable file information.<sup>1</sup> Correct and adequate interviewing of suspects is therefore necessary, not only for generating accurate information, but also for the judicial quality of the file information and the accompanied decision making process, which is particularly important.

The final result of an investigative interview is a police record or a written statement. This written statement is the most essential means of communication between the police on the one hand and lawyers, public prosecution, and judges on the other. The final output of an interview, the written statement, is one of the main components of a judicial file, and has an important informative function (Ponsaers et al., 2001). However, investigative interviewing researchers have paid scant attention to the content and form of written statements. This is quite remarkable given that the end-users, such as lawyers, public prosecutors and judges, need to carefully study this investigative interviewing information in preparation for the judicial examination and accompanying decision-making process. Likewise they need to study the actual police file, of which written interview statements are a pivotal part, prior to deciding on an acquittal or conviction. Moreover the police file consists mainly of the sequence of written statements, especially in countries with an inquisitorial legal system like Belgium. These written statements can be seen as a central depot from which the various legal professionals extract their information. A written police statement as the outcome of an investigative interview is therefore highly valued, and needs to be an accurate representation of the facts. This brings to mind the victims of judicial errors who turned out to be unjustly sentenced to jail.

These miscarriages of justice are examples of inadequate interviews of suspects and subsequent argumentation resulting in a conviction of the suspect that was wrongful and should not have taken place. Conversely, it also happens i.e. when the guilty suspect escapes punishment. Rassin (2002) describes the unjustified conviction of the wrong suspect as a false positive decision on the part of the court, and the failure to convict a guilty suspect as a false negative decision (Table 1). It is not easy, however, to identify examples of the

<sup>1</sup> Can we define a good interview as an interview that provides sufficient relevant information? Given the importance of an interview, that this is information gathering aimed at solving a crime, the information gathered should serve both the prosecution as well as the defence, so the investigation should be carried out both for and against the suspect. This principle is a consequence of the Belgian judicial investigation process having an inquisitorial character (Artikel 56 § 1Sv.; Vanderhallen et al., 2008). Nevertheless, this question has no simple answer, and this attempt to do so does not take into account other relevant issues such as the importance of dynamics during the interview and the varying circumstances of any interviewing process. As yet, no-one has succeeded in providing a sound answer to the question of what constitutes a good interview, an answer that is relevant to all the various circumstances of interviewing. In the context of this dissertation, the link between a good interview and the benefits of gaining relevant information is the crux of the matter.

latter. Despite the fact that judges would prefer to release a guilty suspect (false negative), based on the presumption of innocence, rather than convict an innocent suspect (false positive) (Rassin, 2002), it is mainly the legal profession and the international media that have been paying more attention recently to the principle of fair trial ex article 6 EVMR. This is most probably the reason why false positive decisions are more widely known. We may question, however, whether all this media attention is not resulting in more false negative verdicts, for fear on the part of judges of making the wrong decision. And if this is so, whether it is not the case that false negative verdicts bring in their wake consequences that are just as serious as unjust convictions, particularly for society and general safety and security.

Table 1: Overview of possible court verdicts regarding the guilt of the suspect (Rassin, 2002).

Judicial proceeding	Reality	
	Guilty	Innocent
Guilty	Correct	False positive
Innocent	False negative	Correct

From this it once again becomes apparent that police interviews are one of the most important investigation tools in judicial investigations, the aim of which is to track down crime and the perpetrators and to produce the evidence. Consequently, investigative interviewing and argumentation are essential components of preliminary investigations. We may well ask ourselves, however, whether, during the process of putting together the argumentation in the legal sense, we can speak of a reality that corresponds more closely to that of the crime, and the reality as seen by the suspect. The reality of a legal file implies, after all, that there be sufficient evidence to convince the judge that he can make a sound judgement. Proof in the legal sense therefore specifically means that there is sufficient relevant evidence for the public prosecutor to link a particular suspect the crime. This is what is known as 'the legal reality'.

The question then arises whether the nature and character, particularly the finality, of these various realities correspond sufficiently. If they do not correspond, do these discrepancies create a gap between the reality of the crime (such as identity of the real suspect) and 'legal reality' (i.e. criminal evidence that points to a certain suspect)? If so, can this gap be closed by a thorough preliminary investigation and sound argumentation?



#### 1.4 The importance of deliberate practice

Consequently the proper and sufficient training of interview skills, not by theoretical review only but also by means of specific interactive educational techniques, allowing the interviewers to practice newly learned interview techniques, are essential aspects for the criminal investigation. This is true, not only for the general aim of interviewing which is gathering reliable file information, but also for the final output of an interview which has an important role in the transmission of information and subsequent legal decision-making processing.

Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer (1993) call these interactive educational techniques 'deliberate practice' and argue that these may optimise the learning process for acquiring new behavioural skills. Deliberate practice techniques are techniques in which the trainee, supervised by a coach, (1) masters a well-defined task (2) that is challenging yet feasible, (3) receives direct feedback on his/her performance and results, (4) is allowed to correct his/her mistakes and (5) can repeat the task until it gets a matter of practice (Ericsson, et al., 1993).

As noted, evaluation studies showed that no major learning impact was found after a theoretically organized interviewing training course. In reaction to this, the impact of deliberate practice techniques in relation to training interviewers was examined, the assumption being that these techniques would increase the learning impact. A few researchers therefore studied the use of role-plays, expert's oral and/or written feedback and supervision moments in relation to the interview outcome. The duration, content and use of these techniques were manipulated and special attention was paid to demonstrating proper versus incorrect interview competences by means of real-life recordings, the use of role-playing and providing expert feedback. Furthermore the quality and intenseness of the feedback (individually versus in group; orally or written; during or after the simulated interview) were also varied (Fisher, Geiselman & Amador, 1989; George & Clifford, 1992; Sternberg, Lamb, Esplin & Baradaran, 1999; Orbach et al., 2000; Sternberg et al., 2001; Lamb et al., 2002; Powell, Fisher & Hughes-Scholes, 2008). These evaluation studies contained a pre- and post-interview design where interviewing performances of a small number of interviewers (between five and 14 participants) were studied before and after the training interventions.

George & Clifford (1992) investigated the interview performances of seven experienced police officers who mainly interviewed victims and witnesses. During the training, attention was paid to both the theoretical and conceptual aspects of the cognitive interview of Fisher & Geiselman (1992) on the one hand and deliberate practice on the

other. Deliberate practice learning techniques involved showing proper versus incorrect interview skills by means of real-life recordings and role-playing, including collective and individual feedback by an expert. Based on these educational techniques, the researchers saw an improvement in the post-interviews, in particular in the use of open questions. As far back as 1989 Fisher, Geiselman & Amador described a positive learning impact from using deliberate practice techniques such as role-playing and offering both individual and group feedback by an expert. The results showed that through this the police officers - when interviewing a witness or victim - used significantly more open questions, while closed and leading questions were used far less frequently. Most importantly, this study showed that during the post-training interviews significantly more file information was gathered by using open questions, than prior to the training.

Myklebust and Bjørklund (2006) also explored the effect of training on the police use of open questions. For their study they manipulated the amount of training, distinguishing between a basic theoretical training and a more advanced and practical training whereby the interviewers could gain experience in interviewing children. They hypothesized that the group of child interviewers who received the advanced and most extensive long term training will use more open questions compared to the officers with the less comprehensive training. The findings do not indicate however that this advanced training generates a more frequent use of open questions, suggesting that practice only results in findings that differ from those of deliberate practices.

Recently Powell, Fisher & Hughes-Scholes (2008) also indicated that receiving expert feedback results in an increase use of open-ended questions, which was associated with a greater tendency of child abuse victims to provide abuse related details. The results from a test immediately following the training proved that intra-feedback (feedback given during the role-playing) is more efficient and results in the extended use of open questions as opposed to giving feedback following the role-play (post-feedback). However this feedback's impact did not last long since after 12 weeks there was no difference between the groups of respondents.

These research results suggest that the use of deliberate practice techniques results in better interview performances according to our working definition, and significantly more file information compared to initial theoretical trainings. We may however ask ourselves what more is needed to protract the impact of this training - which is the aim of the current research. Deliberate practice techniques are suitable for training and retraining interpersonal interview skills and attitudes. Yet the essence of these techniques has not been sufficiently elaborated in the above studies, nor has much attention been paid to the acquisition of skills supervised by a coach. The empirically studied training courses

mostly took between two and ten days, which is fairly short since deliberate practice techniques are characterised by an intensive and protracted nature where the police officers are intensively supervised (individually or in group) by a coach or supervisor and where both the coach and the officer engage themselves in an ongoing learning process based on trial and error. It is understood that this time-consuming process complicates an optimal and effective integration of such techniques in the existing temporal interview trainings. Nonetheless if we want police officers to acquire new interview qualities optimally, we specifically need to take into account all five of the characteristics defined by Ericsson et al. (1993) in order to realise a protracted learning impact: police officers, supervised by a coach, need to repeat an acquired task as many times as it takes to make it a matter of practice.

### 1.5 Ongoing feedback

The studies described above mainly studied the impact of short, organized courses whereby the interviewers were sent back to practice afterwards with a lot of new information and without any guidance or follow-up. Ebbinghaus (1885/1962), one of the pioneers of experimental and theoretical psychology, showed with his retrieval studies about human memory, however, that when new information or newly learned behaviour is not maintained, individuals rapidly fall back into old patterns (Boneau, 1998).

Several researchers<sup>2</sup> therefore have studied the learning impact of ongoing expert feedback and follow-up supervision following an initial temporal training. First, Sternberg et al. (1997) investigated whether the use of a fixed interview protocol with prescript questions during the rapport-building interviewing phase, influences the amount of information that is received later during a child abuse interview. Here the researchers distinguished initially between a protocol containing open or direct questions. Based on the research results, it appears that using fixed open questions during the introductory interview phase results in a higher number of words and significantly greater detail about the criminal facts during a subsequent interview phase. Without a fixed script with open questions, the number of open questions used, however, decreased. Second, Sternberg et al. (1999) subsequently studied the impact of offering intensive five-day protocol training completed with follow-up supervision sessions and individual expert feedback. The results showed that irrespective of the script that was used (open versus direct protocol) the trained interviewers used fewer direct and leading questions when participating the follow-up and feedback moments. This ongoing training comprised group supervision sessions every two months, expert feedback on field transcripts and individual telephone consultations.

<sup>2</sup> Sternberg, Lamb, Hershkowitz, Yudilevitch, Orbach, Esplin et al. (1997); Sternberg, Michael, Esplin & Baradaran (1999); Sternberg et al. (2001), Orbach, Hershkowitz, Lamb, Sternberg, Esplin & Horowitz (2000); and Lamb et al. (2000; 2002).

This ongoing training intervention positively uses aspects of the deliberate practice approach, such as the bi-monthly supervision moments and providing expert feedback. It can however be argued that less attention is being paid to personally training the interviewers in, for example, gaining insights into personal functioning and feasible growth potential. It is true that individual feedback was used, but this was done by telephone. Telephone consultation is a worthy alternative but it makes a less lasting impression than a face-to-face conversation where the coach and interviewer see each other in a safe environment. After all, communication between the coach and the interviewer is much more direct and clear in this environment because eye contact and body language signals also play an important role in this context.

Lamb et al. (2002) also concluded that offering ongoing feedback and follow-up sessions result in better interviews in terms of acquired interview skills, such as using open and non-leading questions. But they also stated that following these supervision moments the acquired interview skills drastically deteriorated. During the interviews held in the course of the supervision stage the police officers used half as many non-leading invitations and interventions while the number of multiple choice questions increased. As opposed to this, the interviews taken following the supervision moments resulted in half as much file information and details than was gathered during the supervision stage (Lamb et al., 2002).

Summarizing, the aforementioned research results show (a) the effectiveness of deliberate practice techniques, and (b) the need to repeat ongoing feedback and supervision. However, notwithstanding the positive impact of expert feedback and supervision on the interview results, no study has ever demonstrated protracted structural behavioural changes following the training. From the research results of Lamb et al. (2000; 2002) it appears that interviewers reassumed their former interview practices whenever there was no supervision and expert feedback. These results suggest that offering ongoing supervision moments, expert feedback based on empirical knowledge and organising best practice guidelines (a protocol) is insufficient given that police officers in time cannot distinguish between their own interview behaviour and reliable and advisable interview skills. They are insufficiently aware of their personal professional performances. Gaining an insight into professional functioning is therefore vital if we want to structurally change, optimise and professionalise the officers' interview behaviour. This can be achieved through management of personal interview competences using experience-oriented learning on the job and self-reflection, supervised by a coach. Interviewers can initially be confronted with his/her professional performances, and subsequently be convinced that a behavioural change is needed. This dissertation therefore takes the view that

new training opportunities need to be explored and that the learning impact of a more fundamental training approach, focussing on giving personal and individual attention to investigative interviewers and their professional interview performances, should be empirically studied. Building on previous studies, the present dissertation focuses on the development of two new interviewing training methods and experimentally studies the efficiency of this new training. Before doing so the theoretical framework which motivates the interpersonal training approach will be discussed in the next chapter.

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# Chapter 2.

# Police and

# personality

## 2.1 Interpersonal interview competences

Despite the significance of mastering fixed and less fixed interview protocols little attention has been paid - with the exception of the present dissertation - to interpersonal interview competences. Compared to other evaluation studies, the present dissertation can therefore be defined as innovative, looking forward to new training opportunities.

As the evaluation studies discussed in the previous chapter show that police officers cannot distinguish at times between their actual interview behaviour and the newly learned methods necessary to obtain a reliable interview outcome, this study will focus on training interviewer's interpersonal interview competences when interviewing suspects. Until now feedback and organised supervision have largely focused on how interviewers need to implement reliable interview methods (e.g. open questions, building rapport and an open, empathetic attitude) instead of taking personal capabilities and performances into account. In addition, it has been documented that interviewers are able to recognise poor interviewing behaviour of colleagues although they have a lack of insight into their own interview performances (Powell et al., 2010). We believe however that gaining insight into interviewers' own professional functioning is obligatory if we want to achieve long-lasting changes with regard to professional interview behaviour. Practising new skills may be sufficient at the time, though we assume that particular attention to the interpersonal functioning of the interviewers through competency management of interpersonal interview competences is imperative and would be more beneficial.

Why is interpersonal interviewing competence training required? A suspect interview is a dynamic process of interaction between the interviewer and the suspect, and it is impossible to predict the course of the conversation at the onset. In addition, as discussed, the interview outcome is one of the most valuable contributions in the police file. Here the interviewer has to rely on himself during the interview - notwithstanding the useful interview methods and techniques - and furthermore he is his own, and often only, work instrument. In other words, quite a lot is expected from an interviewer who wants to work optimally. He is supposed to establish close contact with the suspect, using effective communication skills. To this end the interviewer needs to pay attention to the linguistic usage, the body language, his own values and standards that can direct the interview. He must also be able to establish a good rapport so that an appropriate contribution is achieved in good time. In other words, he must have 'intuition'.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the structure and the timing of the interview, the interviewer's own attitudes are important. The interviewer needs to adopt an empathetic attitude towards the suspect in which he shows

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<sup>1</sup> By intuition is meant: fingerspitzengefühl, having feeling or having a nose for interviewing, all examples of intuition related qualities that interviewers tend to attribute to each other.

respect as well as a willingness to listen. It is evident that receiving feedback on these many competences is advisable. In addition we also expect the interviewer to be able to understand the suspect's emotions and place himself in the suspect's social environment. How does it feel to be interviewed by the police, apart from being guilty or not? What does the suspect's context look like and what are the determining values and standards? The intention is that the interviewer should adopt such a professional attitude as to be able to reach the set objectives of the interview.

Furthermore, interviews are difficult to predict. The interviewer, for example, may focus during the first stage mainly on achieving a good and workable relationship. After that he will often have to decide on the spot which questions will keep the suspect talking and what kind of information he will release. This factor - being willing to release, or not, specific information that may have to do with the case - is a vital objective of the police interview. It is the interviewer's task to gather information and find out the truth and to record this information. But the way to get at the truth may differ from person to person when employing personal competences. Hence, becoming aware of these interpersonal interview competences – i.e. becoming aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses – is an initial, important step in offering interviewers a solid training. Training a non-empathic police officer in building rapport for example, is less effective than training someone who is empathic by nature. Making the non-empathetic interviewer aware of his limited empathic capacities and coaching him in professionally dealing with them during the interview is however presumably more effective.

The present dissertation will therefore pay particular attention to the person of the interviewer, with a special focus on creating insight into the interviewer's personal functioning. The present study therefore builds on former studies by focussing on the interviewers' interpersonal growth potential prior to training and optimising interviewers' skills. Therefore the emphasis of the present study is to further develop the potential of the interviewers by providing them with opportunities, under the guidance of a personal coach, to further develop themselves as good interviewers during their daily police work. Consequently, the present study will focus on studying the effect of individual or peer group coaching of interviewers to recognise their personal interview competences<sup>2</sup> Individual coaching of interviewers in this context refers to the development of interpersonal interview competences through monthly interaction between a coach and the interviewer, a strong focus on individual feedback and the use of personal goals. The purpose of this coaching is to create insight into specific behavioural patterns. Individual coaching can therefore be seen as a combination of mentoring and

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<sup>2</sup> The actual content of both individual and peer group coaching as well as the organizational outline will be discussed later.

training on the one hand, and personal counselling on the other. Group coaching can also be defined by this combination of mentoring and counselling, though in addition the focus here will be more on learning from observing peers.

By coaching interviewers individually and in groups, we want to compensate for the absence of human resource (HR) strategy in current criminal investigation services. The accuracy of this coaching approach is reflected in several research results that show that the opportunity to set professional goals motivates employees and makes them more active in carrying out their work if these personal objectives are properly evaluated (Hoekstra & Van Sluijs, 2010). Consequently it appears that self-management together with addressing one's responsibilities, is the key to optimising work performance. Hoekstra & Van Sluijs (2010) define (1) providing development opportunities, (2) motivating for self-management, (3) providing feedback on personal performance and (4) regularly questioning accountability as four constructive means to transform personal potential to real professional performances.

Moreover, Kiosoglous (2010) defines coaching knowledge as the most important characteristic of a trainer/coach and an important aspect that deserves to be given attention during the empirical drafting of coaching programmes. Kiosoglous categorises the methods for gaining these specific coaching skills as follows: (1) through formal and informal training such as theoretical courses, lectures and conferences, (2) using informal training opportunities such as learning from previous experience, (3) by reflecting on previous experience, (4) from the inherent urge to better oneself and to compete with in the work environment, and (5) under the guidance of a mentor. These sources are very similar to training programmes such as the deliberate practice principle of Ericsson, Krampe and Tesch-Romer (1993), and imply that coaches in turn require training using the trial and error principle. Coaches need coaching, as it were.

This dissertation will therefore not only empirically study the effect of the two coaching programmes (individual versus group coaching of police officers). In order to achieve the research objectives, the study also pays detailed attention to the content of a coaching programme that enables police investigative interviewing experts to become fully-fledged interviewer coaches. People are not born with a gift to be interviewer coaches. The experience they garner as they work at the various levels<sup>3</sup> allows them to master the skills required to become an expert coach (Kiosoglous, 2010). Nevertheless there are

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<sup>3</sup> These various stages of expertise are described in chapter 4 within the section on 'Train the trainer'. We will also elaborate in this chapter on who and what determines the status of interview expert. Does one become an interviewer expert only on the basis of job related experience? If so, who decides when someone is experienced? Do colleagues decide this, by enforcing and reinforcing established practices? Or is it better to have external, objective criteria to decide this status, to prevent the consequences linked to self-perpetuation of habits and practices? If so, are the appropriate criteria to hand? What is the difference between internal and external experts? Are expert interviewers necessarily good coaches?

still no accurate and empirically-based descriptions about how interpersonal feedback of interview competences and coaching can be efficiently incorporated into police interviewing training programmes.

## 2.2 Management of interview competences

Although coaching may still be associated with sports, coaching of management of competences, within the world of trade and industry, particularly within HR departments, is more than just a trend (Beirendonck, 1998; Lievens, 2006). Since the 1980s, competency management has increasingly become established in HR activities, where staffs are trained in the selection and recruitment of new employees as well as the assessment and evaluation of existing ones.

The training methods that were developed specifically for the present research find their origin in the competency management philosophy practices, which are highly valued in commercial organisations. Competency management is based on the desire to maximise the benefit to and growth of a company, particularly in financial terms. Van Beirendonck (1998) describes competency management as follows:

*'An integrated set of activities that aim at utilising and developing existing competences, or those that can be recruited, optimally, with a view to realising the mission and goals of the organisation and the improving the performance of the people who work for the organisation.'*

This is done mainly through the use of developmental activities: these are methods to assess, monitor and optimise personal or job-related skills with the aim of optimising function-related tasks. Coaching of interpersonal competences and workplace learning can be seen as two examples of these development activities. In addition, external resources are sought through recruitment and selection activities. These are activities that individuals need to pass during a recruitment procedure where candidates are examined for specific knowledge and expertise that best fit the needs of the business. In line with the desire to increase the benefits to the company, developmental activities and recruitment can be best done in tandem.

It is clear from this description of HR activities and competency management that they are driven by commercial objectives to increase profits, and are thus typical for the survival strategies of profit organisations. It may seem at face value that the profit motives of competency management are not immediately appropriate in a non-profit setting such as the police force, an organisation that finds its support in the non-commercial, public sector and its mission in social goals to do with maintaining security. Yet despite this, profit and non-profit organisations have things in common. Both kinds of organisation share the urge to grow, to do well and optimise their established practises.

The police force as an organisation is also driven by profit, albeit not in the financial sense. While the police do not have an explicit profit motive in mind, the government and society monitor the service they provide in terms of its quality. This is reflected by the attention given to the police, and the way they carry out their duties, by the media, and this in turn influences how they are judged by public opinion. Both commercial and civil service organisations have in common that they strive for 'profit', and depending on their operating terrain, this profit will take on a different form. The yardstick used to measure profit when it concerns interviewing skills is based on the benefit derived from individual growth in relation to interviewing skills. This growth is reflected in better quality interviewer competences as they are used in daily practice. In the context of this study, competency management relates specifically to the means that we want to use to optimise and further professionalise the quality of investigative interviews of suspects. While competency management can be seen as fairly common in the world of trade and industry, it has never before been organised in a criminal police investigation setting in general, and an investigative interviewing context in particular, which makes it more interesting to study.

Based on the competency management literature, these management activities can be organised at different levels, such as an organisational, job-related and personal/individual level (Beirendonck, 1998).

The first level implies defining the general core competency of a company which will be subsequently further adapted by the following levels. These general core competences mainly define what the company stands for and how it wants the clients to perceive it. In reaction to the military style, the bureaucratically organised police force of the past, core police competency these days focuses on Community Oriented Policing - COP. This change of culture – where the former bureaucratic style of command one which was characterised by a strong hierarchal, top down chain of command, giving little or no autonomy and decision making authority to the lower ranks, whose only function was to carry out the orders of higher ranking officers (Ponsaers, 2001; Feltes, 2002) - has a parallel development in the business world. The commercial sector is also constantly changing. In the past it too relied on a hierarchical structure to a far greater extent, one with a lot of rules driven essentially by profit motives, rules to do with being frugal in times of economic crisis, as we have seen in recent times. Profit organisations want to give their commercial goals the best chance of success, with as little investment of time and money as possible, so that profits can grow accordingly. Despite the fact the prevailing situation in the business world is one that is defined by a strictly hierarchical structure, principles that we recognise from the COP model are also evident in this sector. The primary goal of the COP model is to improve the relationship of trust between the

people and the police (Ponsaers, 2001; Feltes, 2002). This philosophy applies to the entire police force, including operational and specialised police work, as well as during police training. In essence, COP is a way of working, an attitude and approach that every person within the police force ought to recognise and concede. It should form a permanent guideline, as it were, regardless of the type of police work involved. The police force should take on board this way of working, so that it is reflected in operational, basic and specialised activities; such as the way they receive the public, work with the public during their interventions, public order and the treatment of victims as well as criminal investigations and investigative interviewing.

The second level where competency management can be organised is related to a specific function or job. A definition of the most relevant skills or competences related to a particular function or task that are needed to ensure a successful outcome have to be provided at this level. This is an important step when training interpersonal interview competences. Before we start to coach the interviewers, we need to study these competences, what they are and how they can be conveyed efficiently. A first and important research phase of the present dissertation represent competency management at this level. It will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

Finally, the third level of competency management is mainly organised at an interpersonal level. Its goal is to further develop the individual potential in line with the general core competences that the organisation stands for. Coaching investigative interviewers can be organised at this level. Once detectives are given more responsibility in line with the current COP philosophy, these detectives should be sufficiently competent to carry this responsibility correctly and with integrity. The fact that delegated responsibility is linked to the competency of officers, legitimises both the study and the use of the competency management method (a profit driven technique) within a non-profit organisation. Accordingly this dissertation mainly studied management of interviewing competency on the second and third level, although always in relation with the general core competency of the first level, and centred in particular on the aim of conducting high quality investigative interviews and gathering reliable information. How levels two and three are approached can be read in the following chapters.

While managing interpersonal competences can take place on various levels, it can also be done in various ways per level (Beirendonck, 1998; Lievens, 2006). In this study, we deliberately chose to focus on 'experiential workplace learning', paying particular attention on the individual, the feedback and opportunities to repeat the exercises. Based on the evaluation studies mentioned earlier, the workplace as a setting (the criminal investigation department) offers many training opportunities that thus far have been

overlooked. Here we refer to the presence of sufficient and good quality know-how in the form of interviewers who, in the eyes of their colleagues, are experienced; ample opportunities to put the newly learned techniques into practice (interviewing suspects is a daily occurrence) as well as the infrastructure to combine these factors. Since 2010, every criminal investigation department at federal level has an interviewing room with the necessary equipment to videotape the interviews<sup>4</sup>. This study will investigate empirically these work place factors that until now have not been exploited in this way. We will focus on both individual and group coaching of interviewers, by internal police interviewing experts as well as by the investigative interviewers. Managing interpersonal interviewing competences in the work place within the framework of this study is primarily a technique to assess and subsequently to optimise interviewing skills. The focus will be on the reliability and quality of the interview on the one hand and the interviewer and his personal development on the other.

## 2.3 Competences and personality

### 2.3.1 Competences

One model that may help structure predictions concerning levels of personal competency, and why some individuals perform certain tasks better than others, is the competency theory of Hoekstra and Van Sluijs (2003; 2010). Although the literature does not clearly define the nature of competences, competency models have been used frequently in different work place practices in the past decades.

Hoekstra and Van Sluijs (2003; 2010) state that competences can be defined as: An individual's latent capacity to perform effectively within a certain task or problem situation in a way that can be observed and assessed objectively. They also state that competences are the result of an interaction between expertise and behaviour, based on personality and intelligence. Furthermore, these authors state that, when it comes to developing personal competences, the interaction between intelligence, personality and the environment also plays a role. Although they claim that factors such as attention, emotions and other influences from the environment activate expertise and behaviour both positively and negatively, it is primarily intelligence and personality that they perceive to be the underlying foundation of individual competences. According to Hoekstra and Van Sluis (2003; 2010), this foundation, and specifically the personality of the interviewer, is responsible for the differences in individual competences and

<sup>4</sup> This is a direct consequence of recent international developments to do with the Saldus arrest, pronounced by the European Court of Human Rights. This decree states that during the first interview a suspect must either have access to legal aid (the presence of a lawyer) or the right to consult a lawyer before the interview regarding the crime to guarantee the right to a fair trial. Apart from the many advantages in terms of reliability, professionalism and transparency, the Belgian Federal Police are of the opinion that audiovisual interviews would be a valid alternative to organising legal aid.



could explain the differences in interviewer style, and why some detectives are better at interviewing than others.

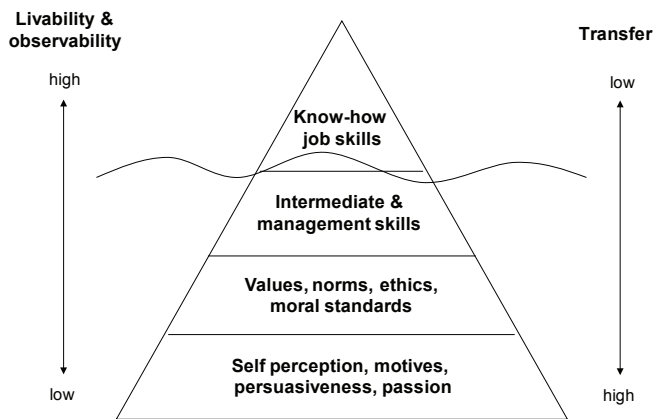
McClelland (1993) describes competences as an expression of underlying personality traits. According to him, these personality characteristics influence the effect of interpersonal competences, which in turn are responsible for achievements in function related and professional situations. Bergenhenegouwen, Horn and Mooijman (1997) describe individual competences as individual professional expertise<sup>5</sup> and the degree to which employees are valued by their organisation. They also emphasise that individual's personal skills and the correct degree of motivation depend on their underlying personality traits. They argue that it is therefore essential that attention is paid to the underlying behavioural motives and personal qualities. This can be achieved through competency management. Although there is no consensus in the literary about the definition of competency the above definitions of competence and professional function related behaviour are similar, each providing a different nuance to explain how these various factors such as personality, motivation, experience and intelligence relate to each other. Despite these efforts to better understand the concept of competence, there is one theory, the Iceberg model of Spencer and Spencer (1993) which has survived as a clearly descriptive and frequently used explanatory model.

Following Spencer and Spencer's theory, competency and its relationship with personality have often in the past been compared to the structure of an iceberg. Because this metaphor allows us to clarify and make concrete the abstract notion of competency, we will use this competency theory here as a theoretical framework for this study. Consequently it is the underlying motivation for why we believe that individual training and coaching of interviewers is crucial for realising high quality interviewer behaviour.

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<sup>5</sup> Bergenhenegouwen, Horn and Mooijman (1997) discuss expertise without defining exactly what it is that they understand by that term. Is it acquired knowledge? Is expertise attributed by the organisation? If so, are external, objective criteria used for this? Can expertise be used as evidence of increasing years in? Since the authors speak of 'expertise appreciated by the organisation', are they not talking about status as opposed to expertise? We will discuss at length in chapter 4 the issues that these questions raise concerning the notion of expertise.

Figure 1: Interpretation of the iceberg model by Bergenhenegouwen et al. (1997)



The iceberg model (Figure 1) symbolises the individual's professional behaviour that is observable in the work place – the top of the iceberg. According to this theory, a number of factors underlie this behaviour that in their turn influence it, but are not directly observable. These factors are symbolised by that part of the iceberg that is not visible because it is below the surface of the water, yet is definitely there and manifests itself.

Bergenhenegouwen et al.'s competency/iceberg model (1997) defines the top layer (Figure 1), the top of the iceberg, as technical knowledge and skills. These are observable knowledge and skills that are required for exercising certain functions. For example, an interviewer must be familiar with reliable interviewing methods and techniques. Competences in the top of the iceberg, therefore, represent professional behaviour. This behaviour is easy to observe and consequently easy to teach. All competences below this level are less observable and therefore less easy to teach. We believe however, that in terms of interviewing, these lower layers are arguably more important. They may well determine an individual's interpersonal interviewing competences and his attitude towards the suspect being questioned.

The second layer of the iceberg (Figure 1) represents intermediate skills. These are skills that are general, can be applied broadly, are not specifically necessary for criminal investigation work or investigative interviewing and are applied in various professions. These are social and communication skills, general technical and professional insights and organisational and management qualities.

Among these intermediate skills are normative attitudes that determine the manner

that a detective will adopt regarding a particular suspect, in a certain interview setting (Figure 1). These normative attitudes ought to be determined, among other things, by the deontological police code on the one hand and the individual's moral norms and values of the detective on the other hand. Whether the deontological code effectively supports the professional attitude of investigative interviewers can however, be questioned. Competences at this level are difficult to master and are influenced by the socialising process that is active in groups, i.e. within the police force, but also within other social systems, such as families. This is pre-eminently a long and very personal process, during which the identity of a person as a member of a group is formed.

The bottom layer of competences contains personality traits that cannot be taught. This is because personality, apart from being inherent, evolves through interaction with the environment. Logically, these are not attributes that can be acquired through training. However, when applying the training methods that are at the core of this study, we focus indirectly on these personality traits by paying attention to the interpersonal interview competences of the interviewers. Competency management aims at making the interviewer conscious of their personal interviewer qualities, and to teach them to develop these qualities further. The aim of this coaching differs from a traditional interviewing training course, whose objective is to teach someone the investigative interviewing techniques, or aspects concerning interview protocol. A course that focuses on an individual's own, personal skills, appeals to the personality of every course participant.

As Figure 1 shows, the word 'competency' is not taken literally in the iceberg model. This is because, following Hoekstra and Van Sluis (2003; 2010), McClelland (1993) and Bergenhenegouwen et al. (1997), this competency theory assumes that interview competences are based on knowledge, skills, personality and attitudes that are included in the iceberg. Knowledge and skills can be found in the top two layers. Attitudes are not mentioned but rest on norms, values and personality attributes found in the bottom two layers. In sum, the iceberg model holds that there are five types of 'competences': motives, traits, self-concept characteristics, knowledge and skills. According to this model 'motives and traits' are the most difficult to change or develop, while 'knowledge and skills' are observable behaviour and should be easier to change. Personal characteristics related to the self-concept should fall somewhere in the middle of the iceberg model, suggesting that interview competences can be trained, though not easily. The assumption is that they can be shaped and developed only to a certain extent and in relation to the personal characteristics of the interviewer.

This dissertation will therefore first explore individual interviewer behaviour and their

underlying interview competences, which are in turn based on intrinsic facets such as personality attributes. Second, when training interviewers, one must therefore take into account the personality of each individual, and their own inherent potential.

### 2.3.2 Personality

Based on the initial personality definition of Allport (1961), Graver and Scheier (1996) describe personality as an internal psychological process that is responsible for the way an individual thinks and behaves:

*'Personality is a dynamic organization, inside the person, of psychological systems that create the person's characteristic patterns of behaviour, thought and feelings' (p. 5)*

This definition of personality, as well as the competency theory described above, is interesting in the context of the present dissertation for the following four reasons (Graver & Scheier, 1996):

- 1) In terms of understanding the consistency or continuity of a person's interview behaviour. For instance, why is it that various interviewers respond differently to similar interview situations, but that these same interviewers, in different interviewing situations, are consistent in their interview behaviour over time?
- 2) To understand the intrinsic motives that drive interviewer behaviour. As the above definition suggests, the term 'personality' suggest that what the interviewer thinks and how he behaves during the interview is steered by a causal force within the person, influencing the way we perceive the interviewer.
- 3) We use the term personality to try and understand, and subsequently, predict individual interviewer behaviour. Why is it that some interviewers are able to make better contact with certain suspects than their colleagues are? And once we understand this, can we use this knowledge to assign interviewers to suspects that need to be interviewed?
- 4) The fourth reason why the notion of personality could be relevant to training interviewers is because we want to describe how people behave and the impression people make. By engaging the personality of an individual, we can describe how the individual behaves according to prominent characteristics that we observe in that particular person. The more detailed and accurate this description is, the better we will understand this person's behaviour, and subsequently be able to predict how they will behave and can be trained.

Given that personalities, and therefore interviewers, are never identical, and given that we are primarily interested in describing interviewer behaviour vis a vis professional conduct of fellow interviewers, recording individual differences among the interviewers is an important aspect of current interviewer coaching initiatives that is often overlooked. Despite the fact that people can react differently in different situations, Allport (1961), Graver and Scheier (1996) define personality as 'internal dynamic organisation of processes within the person'. This indicates that intrapersonal interviewer behaviour is responsible for the degree of continuity in the professional behaviour of an interviewer. We therefore assume that individual interviewer behaviour can be described as fairly consistent and, in line with the iceberg theory, can be developed and optimised to an extent, within the scope of the person's personality contours.

#### *The Five Factor Personality Model*

Today, personality theorists are likely to think of people in terms of continuous trait dimensions. Along with others Hoekstra, Ormel & De Fruyt (2003) believes that the basic structure of personality may consist of five superordinate factors which are often referred to as the 'Big Five' or the 'Five Factor Model (FFM)'.

The FFM is a hierarchical model that structures the personality of individuals according to five general or higher-order factors namely neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. Every personality factor can be defined by six items of lower-order traits. In the present study, these five broad factors as well as the specific lower personality items were used as a framework to study the relationship between interview competences and their interpersonal character defined by personality. A detailed description of this theory and the five personality factors is given in Hoekstra et al. (2003) and Graver and Scheier (1996).

As studied and discussed previously by De Fruyt et al. (2006) the five tendencies (neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness) influence how an interviewer shapes his/her characteristic adaptations such as values, interests and interview competences in association with environmental factors and cognitive abilities such as intelligence. De Fruyt et al. (2006) therefore assume in accordance with Hoekstra and van Sluijs's (2003) competency model, that in terms of interview competences, these five general personality traits can be perceived to be the foundation, and consequently responsible for, professional interview conduct of the interviewer, and that we can describe using interviewer competences that are typical of a particular individual.

## 2.4 Individual interview differences: The Police Interview Competency Inventory

As Gudjonsson (2002) argues:

*'No interviewer is likely to be skilled or good at everything to do with interviewing (p.95).'*

This may be because interviews are applied widely and require various skills. For instance, there is a clear difference in the way interviewing of suspects is approached, as opposed to the interviewing of victims or witnesses (approach, handling and differences in legal processes). Also, distinctions are made between the interviewing of children, victims of sexual assault (sexual offences) and mentally disabled individuals.<sup>6</sup> For this reason, Gudjonsson (2002) stated that interviewers must have at their disposal a wide range of different skills, such as good communication skills, being patience, being sensitive, having a good understanding of human nature, being empathic, having a good temperament, being emotionally stable, showing persistence, having confidence, being able to understand the thinking and feeling of the interviewee etc. Furthermore, Gudjonsson (2002) suggests that depending on the type of interview (suspect, witness or victim) certain specific skills can be an advantage in one situation whereas in another situation they could be a disadvantage. Therefore, helping investigative interviewers to be conscious of these skills by giving them feedback about their own competency level would be assumingly helpful.

In the past, different researchers have attempted to explain these individual interviewing differences. Williamson (1993) for example found consensus among 80 police officers concerning their interviewing styles. Based on his observations of interviews, and supplemented with scientific insights into reliable interviewing, Williamson categorised four different interviewing styles that interviewers may be able to identify with in terms of their own personal style. The four different styles are placed on two complementary scales, namely (i) a task scale, in which the goal of the interview is defined by gathering of evidence on the one hand and extracting a confession on the other and (ii) a social scale, in which the method used in the interview is described as either cooperative or confrontational. These opposing scales result in the following four interviewing styles: 'Collusive', 'Dominant', 'Counselling' and 'Business-like', whereby the first two types are characterised by trying to extract a confession and the last two interview styles focus on gathering evidence. Two thirds of the interviewers could identify with these interrogation styles, whereby about half of the interviewers (N=41) found the dominant interviewer style to be unprofessional and this confrontational method was described as unacceptable.

<sup>6</sup> Elaborating on these differences does not fall within the scope of the present dissertation. In this thesis we concentrate solely on the interviewing of suspects.

Ponsaers et al. (2001) also distinguished five different interviewer styles, based on a large-scale investigation among Belgian detectives, namely 'conservative', 'pragmatic', 'assistant' and 'smart cop'. These detectives also identified their own personal interviewer behaviour with these five categories, choosing one of the five styles as typical of their own interviewer conduct.

Although identifying different types of interviewing is interesting, for training and recruitment purposes it is also useful to study the relation between interviewing behaviour and certain personality traits. The literature shows, however, that few research studies can be found on this subject.

Sear and Stephenson (1997) examined the relationship between personality traits of police interviewers and their interviewing performances. Nineteen police officers completed a questionnaire measuring the five empirically accepted personality traits following the five factor model (see above) and gave permission to the researchers to assess their interview behaviour in four different audio visually recorded interviews. The interview behaviour on the tapes was rated in terms of 13 different skill factors considered necessary in a police interview. Although given its small sample size, the study is arguably not généralisable, the authors felt able to conclude that personality is not related in a straightforward way to interviewing. They found very little evidence of a relationship between a police officer's personality and his or her interviewing behaviour. Based on the fact that personality assessment is generally accepted within HRM activities, such as recruitment, this is difficult to believe because personal nature influences professional behaviour following the Iceberg theory. More research was therefore needed on the similarities and differences between interviewers, particular on the extent to which interviewers are able to vary their personal interview style they adopt as a function of interview circumstances (Cherryman & Bull, 2000; Gudjonsson, 2002).

In response, De Fruyt et al. (2006) gathered self-rated personality traits following the five factor model and defined interpersonal interview competences within a large group of police interviewers (N=230). The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to study the underlying structure of newly defined interview competences in order to construct a measurement tool that could quantitatively assess personal interviewing behaviour, (2) to study the nature of these interview competences by investigating the relationship between these competences and personality. The study resulted in the Police Interview Competency Inventory (PICI). The PICI is a useful measurement tool to identify differences among investigative interviewers and will be therefore used in this study to assess interpersonal interview competences.

The PICI comprises 40 different interview competences from the literature, all of which were judged relevant to experienced police interviewers. These competences include being empathic, having feeling, being talkative, being concentrated, being careful, taking action, being able to keep one's head cool, being dominant et cetera, and can be subdivided into five general dimensional scales. Namely: Careful-Tenacious, Controlled-Non-reactive, Dominant-Insisting, Communicative and Benevolent. Unlike the interview styles described above, these scales are dimensional allowing each interviewer to be placed on any position of the five conceivable interview characteristics. Consequently, a wide range of self-assessed interpersonal interviewer profiles are possible, as opposed to subdivision according to the various categories (De Fruyt et al., 2006; Smets, 2009).

To emphasise the interpersonal character of the PICI self-assessment, De Fruyt et al. studied the relationship between the five PICI dimensions and the five general personality traits. The results showed that all interviewing dimensions were associated to some degree with at least one of the five factor model traits, hereby empirically underscoring the relation between personality and interview competences as previously assumed and described earlier in this chapter, and previously studied by De Fruyt et al. (De Fruyt et al., 2006; Smets, 2009).

The PICI as an assessment tool is not intended to distinguish between good and less good interviewers on the basis of their interpersonal interviewing skills. For this, one would need to first answer the questions 'What is a good investigative interview?' and 'What does a good interviewer look like?' Despite the working definition, in which open questions and not leading questions are essential for gathering reliable information, how interviews unfold remains unpredictable. Interviewing is a complex process, so complicated that until now it has been doubted whether there is a general term that can define what exactly a good interviewer is (Gudjonsson, 2002). Is it necessarily so that what can be described as good in one situation applies in another situation? The PICI as a yardstick only maps quantitatively how an interviewer functions professionally, without discriminating between good or bad interviewer conduct. The PICI therefore has a lot of potential as an assessment instrument to identify individual coaching requirements, prior to training that aims at further development of individual interviewer behaviour, for example. As demonstrated by the evaluation studies mentioned previously, customised, individual coaching is presumably more effectively than general, short-term interview programmes. Individual shortcomings can be dealt with specifically and concretely. The PICI is therefore arguably highly useful when coaching personal interview competences.

Although it has not been possible to date to define the ideal interviewer, we do know from multidisciplinary investigative interviewing research which techniques stand a better



chance of garnering reliable information and which do not. In light of the potential that the PICI has as a self-assessment tool when profiling interpersonal interviewer behaviour, and as well as its usefulness as a rating scale to be used by peer or supervisor in a development setting (De Fruyt et al., 2006), this instrument will be given a prominent role in the present research design and general objectives of this study. The following chapter will therefore pay particular attention to the value of the PICI as a measurement construct.

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# Chapter 3.

# Reliability and correlational validity

**of police interview competences:  
Assessing the stability of the Police Interview  
Competency Inventory**

This chapter is a modified version of paper 1 published as:

Smets, L. (2009). Reliability and Correlational Validity of Police Interview Competences: Assessing the stability of the Police Interview Competency Inventory, In M. Cools, S. De Kimpe, B. De Ruyver, M. Easton, L. Pauwels, P. Ponsaers, G. Vande Walle, T. Vander Beken, F. Vander Laenen, G. Vermeulen, (Eds), *Governance of Security Research Papers Series II, Readings On Criminal Justice, Criminal Law & Policing* (pp. 311-328). Antwerpen: Maklu.

## ABSTRACT

The PICI is an instrument with a five dimensional structure, designed to assess interviewing competences (De Fruy, Bockstaele, Taris & Van Hiel, 2006). Based on self-rated interview competences, this tool for police investigative interviewers enables a quantitative comparison between interviewers, but could also potentially be used for assessment and development purposes. The aim of the first study of this dissertation was to replicate and extend the initial research findings of the original study of De Fruyt et al. (2006). We did so by studying the structural replicability, internal consistency and correlational validity of the PICI measurement tool. Guided by the aforementioned study of De Fruyt et al. (2006), this study first extended the original list of competence items to include nine new competences which were not previously identified. Second, whereas the previous sample consisted of 230 experienced police interviewers, the present sample was enlarged and extended to include inexperienced police investigators, creating a more general and representative sample of 549 police officers. We hypothesised that the additional competence items would not influence the stability of the police interviewing competency constructs, and assumed that experience would have no effect on the structure of the inventory. The data provided strong support for both these hypotheses. The results show that (1) the newly defined competence items and (2) experience of the interviewers have no additional value in relation to defining the structure of interview competences. The results are theoretically consistent and therefore provide strong evidence for a nomological interviewing competency network representing construct validity. Moreover, this outcome resulted in highly consistent results, suggesting that the PICI measurement instrument is stable.

**KEYWORDS:** Investigative interviewing; personality; PICI; external and internal validity of interview competences; reliability

### 3.1 Introduction: Police investigative interviewing and training

The police interview is one of the most important investigative tools that law enforcement has to hand (Holmberg, 2004). Consequently, empirical research has shown that in practice, police officers spend 70% to 80% of their time conducting investigative interviews (Kohnken, 1995). Questioning witnesses, suspects or victims is the main component of a police investigation (Baldwin, 1994).

Studies into criminal justice systems, performed in several countries over recent decades, have demonstrated that this tool has not always been used appropriately. Non-professional and fallible interview behaviour has led, in some cases, to incompetent police interviewing of suspects (Bull & Milne, 2004). However, multidisciplinary research into

investigative interviewing has led to the development of a body of knowledge concerning interviewing techniques, designed to reduce insufficient and incompetent interviewing. This research has been conducted around various themes such as false confessions, the detection of deception, interviewing techniques, interviewing children, interviewing murderers and sexual offenders etc. As a result of this research, methods of police interviewing changed during the twentieth century (Holmberg, 2004). Williamson (1993) described this evolution as a shift from interrogation to investigative interviewing. This entailed an evolution from using psychological tricks in order to persuade the suspect to confess (Inbau, Reid, & Buckley, 1986) to using non-suggestible and open-ended questions in order to ensure that a reliable and truthful testimony is obtained (Milne & Bull, 1999). Countries even started to develop comprehensive training courses designed to improve and assess police investigative interviewing, translating this scientific knowledge into practice (Bull & Milne, 2004). In Belgium, the federal police organise investigative interviewing courses based on information concerning the human memory, vulnerability to pressure and deception. Police officers are no longer solely educated in the field. However, based on the experiences of practitioners, most police officers still find learning from field practice the most effective way to study police interviewing. When police officers are asked to identify what makes a good interviewer, they cite experience and personal characteristics as highly important, rather than training courses (Wright & Powell, 2007). Wright and Powell (2007) conducted individual in-depth interviews with both police investigative interviewers and researchers or experts in the field. They asked the participants to define what qualifies someone to interview a child witness. Based on this study, police officers view human nature associated with personality traits as being the most important factor. Interviewers' perceptions of what defines a good investigative interview are therefore incongruent with the scientific knowledge regarding how to perform interviews, as cited by experts (Wright et al., 2007). Consequently, offering a proper education to police officers concerning reliable investigative interview techniques and methods still seems rather insufficient according to the interviewers.

Investigative interviewing has greatly improved thanks to this empirical evolution, but it will probably take some time before general principles and specialised skills will be standardised in police practice (Williamson, 1993). In order to fill this gap, the present paper therefore focuses on a rather new investigative interviewing theme within an educational context, namely investigative interviewing competences. One major issue in police training regarding interviews is trying to understand and improve interview competences. Identifying interpersonal interviewing skills can be advantageous in order to match, for example, the right kind of interviewer with the right kind of suspect (or interviewee). It is therefore important to measure these interviewing competences and personality traits, which had originally been identified by De Fruyt et al. (2006).

The outcome of their study resulted in the development of the PICI. The latter is a self-assessment instrument for police officers that enable a quantitative comparison between police investigative interviewers.

The main aim of the present study is to assess the structural replicability of the PICI. In particular, we will further investigate the reliability and validity of the PICI measurement constructs. The present paper builds upon previous studies by comparing the level of experience of different groups of investigative interviewers through the use of an enlarged research setting. Whereas the previous sample consisted of 230 experienced police interviewers, the research sample for this study consisted of both experienced and inexperienced interviewers, creating a more diverse sample of 549 police officers. In addition, we extended the original list of interview competences by adding nine new items. Therefore, this paper adds to our knowledge of the reliability and validity of the PICI by elaborating on the previous study of De Fruyt et al. (2006). In particular, this paper addresses the issues of its reliability and validity using a different sample and addresses the following research questions: (a) How comprehensive are the original interviewing competency items? (b) How internally consistent are the PICI subscales? (c) What is the correlational validity of the investigative interviewing competency constructs in relation to personality? (d) Can potential differences in interview competency be explained by the subject's level of experience?

### 3.2 Theoretical background

#### 3.2.1 The investigative interview as a dynamic interactive process

Gathering information is the primary purpose of a criminal investigation. In addition, the relevance and the value of this information will be juridicially examined in relation to the question of the suspect's guilt. Appropriate training in reliable interviewing skills, including technical and methodological principles, is therefore essential. However, these are not the only relevant aspects which police officers have to bear in mind when gathering relevant information about a case. As the interview can be thought of as a reflection of a dynamic and interactive process, in which different aspects are often simultaneously addressed, such as substantive, relational, procedural and technical matters (Bockstaele, De Fruyt, & De Greef, 2005). Bearing in mind the aim of interviewing, it is of great importance to address these different aspects. Addressing these aspects correctly therefore requires a professional attitude, different behavioural skills and a healthy portion of adaptability (Bockstaele et al., 2005). In practice, police investigative interviewers adapt continuously, depending on the interviewee, the type of investigation and the situation. This often produces good results in terms of producing relevant information about



a case. Moreover, the flexibility required from an interviewer has made investigative interviewing a popular research method in the police (Köhnken 1995). One can argue that the interviewer must be able to act appropriately in various interactive situations, bearing in mind a variety of aspects of the interview process. However, we cannot expect all interviewers to be infallible. Neither can we expect that interviewers will be able to adequately and appropriately adapt to each possible interview situation e.g. interviewing suspects, witness and victims. Therefore it is often assumed that the possibility to adapt to certain interview situations can be explained through specific interpersonal interview skills.

The contemporary scientific discussion concerning interpersonal interview skills has defined various descriptive enumerations of competences (Gudjonsson, 2002; Ponsaers, Mulkers, & Stoop, 2001; Williamson, 1993). These enumerations give no advanced insight into the actual nature of these interpersonal skills, and do not distinguish between the different types of interview situation (De Fruyt et al., 2006). Gudjonsson (2002) suggested that, depending on the type of interviewee, certain specific skills can be an advantage in one situation, which in another would be disadvantageous. This can intuitively be confirmed by field practice; however, this has not been sufficiently analysed empirically. Scant information is available concerning the relationship between methodological interviewing techniques on the one hand, and the interpersonal capabilities of an interviewer on the other. In addition, even less is known concerning the effects of interpersonal skills on the outcome of an actual interview.

### 3.2.2 Personality-based and behavioural outcomes of interviews

Psychological studies currently define personality traits using five major dimensions. These dimensions are called the 'big five' personality traits and are labelled as extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness (De Fruyt et al., 2006; Costa & McCrae, 1992). Each dimension consists of a cluster of more specific traits, which substantively correlate. It is assumed that personality can explain interpersonal differences and behavioural outcomes. These five general personality traits are also referred to as the 'five factor model', or FFM (McCrae & Costa, 1997). McCrae and Costa (1997) define these traits as stable tendencies that shape our characteristic adaptations (e.g. personal interests, values and competences) in association with our environment and our cognitive abilities. These tendencies are considered to be latent and stable dispositions and are assumed to be largely influenced by biology (De Fruyt et al., 2006; Costa & McCrae, 1997). Personality psychologists have argued, therefore, that personality, combined with environmental and cognitive abilities, is responsible for the behavioural competency level of an individual. Interpersonal descriptions of personality traits will be subsequently used in order to describe the manifestation of behavioural competences in interviews.

In addition, behavioural competency can be best described as a combination of personality, knowledge, values, skills and the ability to know, understand and perform certain behaviours in order to achieve desirable goals (Vass, 2004). De Fruyt et al. (2006) therefore described competences in the words of Hoekstra and Van Sluijs (2003):

*“Competences are constructs reflecting the interaction between an individual’s expertise and his/her behavioural repertoire to perform and excel in a job. An individual’s expertise is defined as a disposal of required knowledge, experience to solve specific problems. Activation and application of this expertise are further shaped by personal’s behavioural repertoire” (Hoekstra & Van Sluijs (2003), quoted in De Fruyt et al., 2006, p. 569 ).*

Furthermore, Hoekstra and Van Sluijs (2003) defined personality traits and intelligence as fundamental principles on which these competences are built. Based upon this, learning experiences such as formal experiences (e.g. through education) and informal experiences (life experience and work) are described as activities that subsequently develop these competences (De Fruyt et al., 2006). This consequently implies that individuals are able to continuously develop these interpersonal skills. Bearing in mind the stable nature of personality, however, this change will always be within the range of our own personal capabilities. In other words, experience is considered to have a rather small impact on behavioural disposition. For example, a rather timid interviewer can pick up assertive behaviour, but will never evolve to be an interviewer who dominates the interview. It can therefore be assumed that experience does not have a major influence on individual interview competences.

### 3.3 The PICI

De Fruyt et al. (2006) developed the PICI measurement instrument. The PICI measurement instrument takes into account five dimensions of investigative interviewing competences. These dimensions form the underlying structure of investigative interviewing behaviour. The examination of interview competences is a rather new theme within investigative interviewing research, which has been broached through the objectives of both the previous and the present study. The PICI instrument is based on self-assessments of the necessary values, skills, personal features and personality traits for conducting an interview. The PICI instrument is an inventory which consists of 40 items of interview competences classified into five subscales and is designed to enable the quantitative comparison of the behaviour of interviewers. These five components must be considered as the opposite of a categorical approach, as they represent dimensional constructs. This means that the subscales are independent of each other and each interviewer can be positioned on each possible dimensional space of each dimension (De Fruyt et al., 2006). The five main interview dimensions are ‘careful-tenacious’, ‘controlled-non-reactive’,

‘dominant-insisting’, ‘communicative’ and ‘benevolent’.

High scores for the first dimension, ‘careful-tenacious’, represents interview behaviour that involves a systematic and step-by-step approach accompanied by attention to detail. Low scores reflect less preparation and inconsistent interviewing techniques (De Fruyt et al., 2006). The second dimension refers to non-reactive behaviour and the ability to handle pressure and cope with stress. Individuals that have high scores for this dimension are not easily overwhelmed by the emotions of the interviewee. They can endure verbal abuse and attacks from suspects. People with low scores are described as easily upset and emotionally reactive, and they are quickly provoked and intimidated by interviewees. This dimension is therefore called ‘controlled-non-reactive’. The third PICI dimension, ‘dominant-insisting’, reflects a rather dominant interview style, but one in which the interviewer does not resort to verbal pressure. However, low scores reflect a lack of intimidating interview behaviour. This dimension can be described as follows:

*“Strongly associated with the coercive interview style described by Gudjonsson (2003) and Williamson (1993). High scorers on this dimension are clearly in charge of the interview and they leave no room for the interviewee to escape cognitively nor verbally. They act dominantly when faced with blocking assumptions or inconsistencies. Low scorers leave more room for the interviewee, putting him/her less under pressure. They are less confronting and intimidating, leave more space for the interviewee, and let him/her do most of the talking” (De Fruyt et al., 2006, p. 574).*

The fourth component refers to communication skills and interpersonal adaptation. This dimension is therefore labelled as ‘communicative’. People who score highly for this dimension can communicate easily with the interviewee, have an empathetic approach and usually exhibit coaching behaviour towards the interviewee. In addition the interviewer has a good level of self-awareness and can reflect on his or her behaviour in terms of his or her interaction with the interviewee. Low scorers, on the other hand, present more formal and reserved behaviour and have difficulties in seeing others’ perspectives (De Fruyt et al., 2006). Final, the fifth PICI dimension is ‘benevolent’. This dimension has been previously described as follows:

*“High scorers on this dimension are accommodating, act without prejudice, and have an altruistic and benevolent approach. They do not force confessions from suspects, but achieve results through a benevolent, inviting and collaborative approach to the interviewee. Sometimes colleagues and suspects perceive them as somewhat naïve. Low scorers act less benevolently and accommodating, and often have an explicit idea and opinion about facts and persons impacting on their behaviour” (De Fruyt et al., 2006: p. 575).*

Previous studies have demonstrated that differences in levels of behavioural competency can be explained by differences in personality. Therefore, De Fruyt et al. (2006) studied the relationship between the aforementioned PICI dimensions and the FFM personality traits in order to define the nature of these interview competences. The results showed that the five interview competences correlated with the five personality traits. In particular, high scores for 'extraversion' and 'conscientiousness', combined with low scores for 'neuroticism', are common and favourable characteristics of police interviewers. Furthermore, individuals with high scores for 'agreeableness' seem to be more likely to act more benevolently during interviews, whereas high scores on 'agreeableness' combined with low scores for 'neuroticism' seem to result in the interviewer acting in a 'controlled-non-reactive' way during interviews (De Fruyt et al., 2006). Based on these findings, the authors emphasised Hoekstra and Van Sluijs' model of behavioural competency which conceptualises personality traits as the fundamental building blocks of behavioural competency.

### 3.4 The present study

#### 3.4.1 Method

The aim of this study is to examine the reliability and structural replicability of the PICI measurement construct. Reliability is a prerequisite for validity. In this study, reliability is restricted to the study of the internal consistency of the subscales. Validity refers to the degree to which an instrument accurately measures what it needs to measure. Therefore, the present study has been restricted to a test of correlational validity. This means that theoretically defined associations between concepts are examined, with attention to the direction and the strengths of these associations. A specific concept such as interview competency can be clarified when it is captured in a theoretical construct defined by other characteristics; in this case, personality traits.

In order to accurately examine the stability of the PICI, we extended the original list of competency items by adding items and by enlarging the sample by sampling both experienced as non-experienced interviewers. Consequently, the present study was conducted in subsequent phases. First, we examined the added value of including competence items in the interview competency construct. The original list of competency items was extended by adding new ones. If the PICI measurement constructs are stable and valid, then adding items should not be expected to bring about changes in the instrument's latent structure. If adding items does not change the latent structure, the reliability and correlational validity of the original instrument will be further discussed. Finally, the effect of an interviewer's level of experience on the stability of the police

interviewing competency constructs will be studied. By doing so, we will study whether the original PICI items sufficiently cover all possible interview competences which can be detected within interpersonal interviewing behaviour regardless the experience level of the interviewers.

In order to assess the latent structure of the PICI we followed the same procedure as was deployed in the study by De Fruyt et al. (2006). Principle component analysis (PCA) was used to study the latent structure of the extended set of competence items. De Fruyt et al. (2006) defined their scales of competence by identifying the eight competence items that had the highest primary loadings per competence and that had no secondary loadings higher than .20. This method resulted into the construction of a 40 item marker list, namely the PICI. By adding new items and replicating the original study, we are challenging the PICI instrument. In the results section, the extent to which the PICI structure is replicable will become clear.

### 3.4.2 Subjects

This study used 549 police officers that were researched through one of the five Dutch-speaking police academies in Belgium accessed following a variety of different courses at the time. The research sample consisted of 71% men and 29% women<sup>1</sup>. The experienced subsample comprised 251 police officers who had already gained practical experience in police investigative interviewing during their career. The mean age of the police officers was 39.64 years old (SD = 8.27). The inexperienced subsample comprised 271 recruits; these were aspirant-inspectors who were attending the initial one-year police training course and who were not active in the field when they filled in the questionnaires. They did not have any investigative interviewing experience, but the majority had observed at least one investigative interview during their teaching practice. This group of respondents had a mean age of 25.26 years old (SD = 5.11). Cooperation was voluntary and confidential. All analyses were conducted over the whole sample of (both experienced and non-experienced) interviewers.

### 3.4.3 Questionnaires

At the beginning of a arbitrary course, the participants were asked to complete three questionnaires: (a) the extended item list of 75 competence items; (b) the Dutch adaptation of the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (Hoekstra et al., 2006); and (c) a list of questions regarding their background characteristics. Our list of 75 competence items consisted of the original 66 interviewing competences with the addition of different characteristics of interviewers as reported in the literature. Police officers

<sup>1</sup> 28 participants did not answer the gender question.

were asked to rate these competences on a five-point Likert scale with anchor points labelled as ‘hardly characteristic’, ‘barely characteristic’, ‘more or less characteristic’ and ‘very characteristic’ for their own interview performances. This included self-ratings concerning their daily experiences for the experienced participants. Inexperienced police officers had to imagine themselves in interviews and fill in the inventory using their knowledge of themselves. The personality of the participants was assessed using the Dutch translation of the NEO-PI-R (Hoekstra, Ormel, & De Fruyt, 1996). This inventory has 240 items and assesses the FFM with 30 facets structured in a hierarchy under the five higher order domains (Bockstaele, Fruyt, & De Greef, 2006; Costa & McCrae, 1992). These questions were also rated on a five-point Likert scale with anchor points ranging from ‘totally disagree’ to ‘totally agree’. Through the use of background questions, we obtained information regarding the participants’ gender, age, function and number of years of service and experience.

### 3.5 Results

#### 3.5.1 Extending the PICI instrument with additional competence items

The present study challenged the comprehensiveness of the PICI instrument by adding nine new competence items derived from the relevant literature. Williamson (1993) and Nierop (2005) have pointed out some important investigative interviewing skills such as “being creative”, “being business like (factual and formal)”, “being alert”, “being clear”, “being non-judgemental”, “being objective”, “being friendly”, “being stern” and “being reserved”. These items were not previously assessed by De Fruyt et al. (2006) and were therefore added to the original competence item list. Adding items would be superfluous if our study fails to retain items that were not already retained in the study by De Fruyt et al (2006). The additional value of adding extra items was examined through PCA, as explained above. We did not succeed in identifying additional items that made a substantive contribution to the factor structure. Consequently, our study suggests that the PICI instrument is stable; the highest loading competence items per factor in this study were not significantly different from the previously identified ones.

#### 3.5.2 Retesting the internal consistency of the PICI subscales

The results above show that the additional competence items did not lead to the emergence of a new or different police interviewing competency constructs. Due to the fact that no additional information was gained from these items, these results suggest that no new items are necessary in order to fully describe the structure of the investigative interviewing competences. We therefore assume that the initial item list is comprehensive. Consequently, we left the additional competence items out of subsequent

analyses and conducted further analysis on the previously identified items. We performed a PCA (varimax rotation) on the self-ratings acquired using the initial competence item list. After inspection of the factor loadings of the items and inspection of the decrease in eigenvalues, five factors with eigenvalues of more than one explained 43.21% of the variance. Thereafter, the PICI syntax was run on the present data. The outcome resulted in the reconstruction of the five PICI 40 item list and accompanying subscales with satisfactory Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficients of (.83), (.82), (.76), (.77) and (.83), where the original items were still good markers for the five initial factors.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of original and present study

Scale/construct	Cronbach's Alpha	
	Original Study	Present Study
<b>Careful-Tenacious</b>	.88	.83
Being thorough		
Working with relentless zeal		
Being careful		
Being persistent (stick to one's task)		
Being concentrated		
Having perseverance		
Being driven		
Paying attention to details		
<b>Controlled-Non-reactive</b>	.82	.82
Being quiet		
Being calm		
Being self-controlled		
Being able to handle pressure		
Being patient		
Be thick-skinned		
Being able to keep one's head cool		
Being able to put things in perspective		
<b>Dominant-Insisting</b>	.83	.76
Being offensive		
Having a tongue of one's own		
Not being tongue-tied		
Being rigid		
Being talkative		
Being authoritative		
Taking action		
Being assertive		
<b>Communicative</b>	.82	.77
Having feeling		
Being communicative		
Being quick to understand		
Being fluent in social contacts		
Being able to respond quickly and appropriate		
Having good intuition		
Being able to observe him/herself		
Being persuasive		
<b>Benevolent</b>	.82	.83
Being understanding		
Being good-hearted		
Being tender		
Being able to act gently		
Being complaisant		
Having sympathy		
Being empathic		
Having the ability to calm other people		



### 3.5.3 Correlational validity of the PICI

The next step in this analysis was to test the correlational validity of the instrument of measurement. Therefore, we assessed the correlations between interview competences and personality traits. The correlational matrix of the interview dimensions and the FFM traits is set out in Table 2. The findings demonstrate that all interview PICI factors are similarly correlated with one to four FFM factors and that all FFM factors are associated with at least one of the five interview dimensions, as was the case in the original study. Once again, the results show high scores for ‘extraversion’ and ‘conscientiousness’, combined with low scores for ‘neuroticism’. Furthermore, individuals with high scores for ‘agreeableness’ are more likely to act more benevolently during interviews, whereas high scores for ‘agreeableness’ combined with low scores for ‘neuroticism’ seem to result in the interviewer acting in a ‘controlled-non-reactive’ way. In addition, the personality dimension of ‘agreeableness’ is negatively correlated with ‘dominant-insisting’. These results reflect a very similar trend to the original differences in correlation, although the level of significance is rather different for the ‘benevolent’ dimension. This PICI dimension did not strongly correlate in the previous study with the personality trait of ‘extraversion’, whilst the present results demonstrate that the ‘benevolent’ dimension correlates significantly with ‘extraversion’. The original study described the ‘openness to experience’ dimension as an indicator of shared variance with the ‘controlled-non-reactive’ dimension, and there was no significant association between this trait and the ‘benevolent’ dimension. Compared with the present study, the original levels of significance for the ‘openness to experience’ trait are in opposition. This trait does not correlate with the PICI ‘controlled-non-reactive’ dimension but has a significant effect on the ‘benevolent’ dimension.

Table 2. PICI - FFM correlations of present and original study

PICI / FFM	Neuroticism		Extraversion		Openness to experience		Agreeableness		Conscientiousness	
	Original Study	Present Study	Original Study	Present Study	Original Study	Present Study	Original Study	Present Study	Original Study	Present Study
Careful-Tenacious	-.27***	-.26**	.28***	.17**	.02	.00	.01	.07	.61***	.53**
Controlled-Non-reactive	-.36***	-.44**	.15*	.14**	.24***	.06	.32***	.18**	.22**	.27**
Dominant-Insisting	-.18*	-.16**	.30***	.28**	.05	.05	-.39***	-.28**	.23**	.19**
Communicative	-.24***	-.30**	.36***	.40**	.18*	.22**	-.01	.05	.30***	.28**
Benevolent	.07	.04	.04	.26**	.10	.23**	.49***	.37**	.07	.03

\*p< .05, \*\*p< .01, \*\*\*p< .001

### 3.5.4 Interview competences and levels of experience

Participants in the previous study comprised only experienced interviewers who voluntarily attended a specialised investigative interviewing training course. Instead of

this self-estimated sample, the present study used a more general and representative sample including recruits, while distinguishing between experienced and inexperienced participants. We assumed that the officers' levels of experience might not influence the structure of the PICI inventory. This hypothesis was derived from theories of personality. One-way analyses of variance on each PICI dimension were used in order to compare both subsamples in terms of the five interview competences. Our results show no significant differences in the means of the subgroups for 'careful-tenacious', 'controlled-non-reactive', 'dominant-insisting' and 'communicative'. It is worth mentioning that we found a difference in the means for the fifth PICI dimension. This indicated that experience has a significant effect on benevolence ( $F(1, 514) = 19.38, p < .001$ ). Scores on the benevolence scale were significantly higher among the inexperienced police officers with a mean difference smaller than half of a standard deviation. These results show that experienced interviewers are presumed to behave in a less benevolent and accommodating manner (as opposed to an altruistic and accommodating approach) during an interview.

### 3.6 Discussion and conclusions

The PICI is a new instrument that has been developed for police officers. Based on self-assessment, this five-dimensional instrument can be used to quantitatively compare investigative interviewing behaviours and could potentially be used as an assessment tool. Therefore, it is necessary to gain further insights into the stability of the instrument. The main objective of the present study was to assess the PICI measurement construct in order to further investigate the reliability and validity of this instrument. Consequently, we used an extended version of the interview competency item list and an enlarged research setting. The results were very similar to those of the previous study, suggesting that the PICI measurement instrument is stable. The first aim of the present study was to examine the comprehensiveness of the PICI measurement instrument in order to make sure that the original competence items were able to describe all of the possible differences between interviewers. Nine new interview competences, derived from the literature, were added to the initial list of 66 competency items in order to provide a thorough and comprehensive account of potential differences between interviewers. A PCA produced a very similar pattern. These results show that the additional competences identified in the present study had no added value in relation to defining the structure of interview competences. Therefore, the latent structure of this method of measuring investigative interviewing competency is assumed to be rather stable. The second aim of the current study was to examine the PICI subscales and the internal consistency of the accompanying competence items. The PICI results that were acquired remained highly consistent. Although two of the five Cronbach Alpha internal consistency values were somewhat lower than 0.80, all five values were satisfactory and represent good internal reliabilities of the PICI subscales. The third aim was to examine the validity of the PICI

measurement instrument. Based on the theoretical framework we therefore examined the correlational association between the interview competences and personality traits. The correlation pattern of the present study (reported in Table 2) established the rather stable basis of the interview competences for both the experienced and the inexperienced police officers, as all of the interview dimensions correlate substantially with one to four personality traits and all five personality traits are associated with the interview dimensions. For example, high scores for 'extraversion' and 'conscientiousness', in combination with low scores for 'neuroticism', can still be perceived as representing favourable personality characteristics for police interviewers (De Fruyt et al., 2006). These results are sufficiently high and theoretically consistent. Moreover, we can conclude that the PICI instrument measures the interview competency construct in a valid way. As a consequence, these results provide strong evidence for a nomological interviewing competency network. Finally, we hypothesised that experience has no effect on interview competency. The results suggest that experience does not explain differences between individual levels of competency, with the exception of the difference between the two sub-samples in terms of the 'benevolent' dimension. Scores for this PICI dimension were significantly lower among the experienced police officers in comparison with the inexperienced ones. Nevertheless, we can conclude that experience has no general predictive value in relation to individual differences in levels of competence, although interpersonal differences in interview competency can be predicted using experience (by half a standard deviation) regarding 'benevolent' interview behaviour. Based on these results, the experienced interviewers are presumed to behave in a less benevolent and accommodating manner (as opposed to an altruistic and accommodating manner) during the interview; in other words, they are more dominant. We can assume that this behavioural difference is a result of the professional and ethical attitudes of the recruits, which does not always correspond with the behaviour of operational officers. When recruits from the police academy go into the field of policing, they often need to adapt to more dominant existing patterns of police behaviour (Chan, 2008). We predicted that experience has no major effect when studying the PICI construct and that, consequently, interview competences have a rather stable interpersonal nature with little space for changes and development at the level of intra-individual competency. Our findings are compatible with the general principles of the dispositional perspective of personality. For years, researchers working in the field of personality and social psychology have tried to generalise human behaviour based on rather stable personality dimensions. This theory argues that human behaviour reflects a rather consistent accumulation of interpersonal skills and characteristics across different situations (Beirendonck, 1998). The level of experience of the participants notwithstanding, our results suggest that the construct of police interviewing competences is able to define interview behaviour based on self-rated competences. These results are conforming to the idea that human behaviour is

consistent across different situations (trans-situational consistency) and supports the behavioural competency model.

In spite of this valuable and rather strong outcome, this study also has some limitations that need to be taken into account. First, the data are based on self-ratings. As previously discussed by De Fruyt et al. (2006), self-descriptions have a number of advantages but they can also cause self-presentation biases. Self-image can differ from others' perceptions of the individual. Therefore, future studies need to collect other ratings such as PICI peer ratings in order to examine the inter-rater reliability of the instrument. Secondly, thus far studies have been cross-sectional and correlational and have not analysed the predictable value of the PICI scores in relation to interview behaviour. Results of real life evaluative studies and penal studies as opposed to laboratory research are therefore required and need to empirically study whether results are biased as a result of the methodology deployed.

Despite the importance of gathering information for use by law enforcement personnel, we still can observe a gap between the 'know how' of interviewing and current interview practices in the field. In previous decades, academic researchers were mainly interested in interviewing methods which aimed to bring about reliable police interviews in practice. This is still the main goal of scientific research into methods of interviewing. Recently, researchers have also been concentrating on the empirical study of the effect of interviewing training courses, although little attention has been paid to interpersonal skills, characteristics and differences between interviewers. However, we can question whether everyone is suited to conducting appropriate and reliable interviews with suspects. We can assume that it is valuable to provide investigative interviewers with a degree of consciousness concerning their own interpersonal skills or levels of competency that will serve as guidelines and can be of help in making intricate decisions that arise during interviews. Nevertheless, little is known concerning the effect of training programmes regarding interpersonal interview competences on the legal outcome of interviews. For example: can we improve the information gathering process by focussing on the assessment and development of specific personal interview competences? Studies including regression analyses are appropriate for the investigation of which personality traits can explain certain interviewing behaviours. Therefore future research needs to be conducted.

### 3.7 Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank the directors of the Flemish Police academies and all of the 549 police officers who were willing to participate in this study.

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# Chapter 4.

# Coaching

# investigative

# interviewing

# competences

Unlike the majority of investigative interviewing studies, this study does not focus on the interviewing of suspects but on how police interviewers can be trained more efficiently in order to reduce the risk of qualitatively poor suspect interviewing behaviour. This study empirically investigates how interpersonal interview competences can be coached personally and in groups, at the workplace, assuming that insufficient training still causes difficulties in everyday interviews. In particular, we assume that improving interviewers' personal competences will result in a more substantial learning impact compared to the current interviewing training programmes as these programmes do not take individual interview competences into account. Coaching is seen today as a relatively broad concept whereby a trainee or a group of trainees can be coached in various aspects. We assume, however, that the more intensive the coaching and the contact between the coach and the trainee is, the stronger the effect of the training will be. Therefore this study is innovative because the idea of personal coaching, as it is known in the world of trade and industry, has never before been implemented in everyday criminal investigations. This study investigates the potential difference between two newly designed types of interviewing training procedures: individual and time-intensive coaching versus single one-day group feedback, in order to study the effect of the intensity of both types of coaching. How these training methods were organised, administered and completed at the workplace, as well as the actual content of the two training interventions will be described in this chapter.

Research phase two and three of this dissertation which are reported in the next chapters, are the result of a longitudinal experiment that was conducted in six different Belgian criminal investigation departments. A pre and post coaching design was developed to empirically study the effect of these two newly-developed in-house coaching methods.

Below, we describe the sample structure, the participant profiles, the content of the coaching interventions and the empirical study of the evolution of the coached interviewer competences using a pre and post coaching design.

#### **4.1 Research sample**

For the purposes of this study, we used three local criminal investigation departments and three federal investigation departments from various police zones in large Flemish cities, namely Ghent, Antwerp and Mechelen. The presence of linguistic frontiers in Belgium was indirectly responsible for the choice of Dutch language police forces, as Dutch is the researcher's native tongue. This preference is a consequence of communication being an essential factor in coaching and guiding individuals and groups. This geographical distinction was acceptable given that the Dutch speaking area of Belgium has sufficient police forces to meet the requirements of the study.

The Belgian Police Force is an integrated police force, structured on two levels: federal (the federal police) and local (the local police). While there is no hierarchical connection between the two levels, and both the federal and local police forces support each other and are bound to help each other when exercising their duties, it is evident from prevailing investigative practices that both police organisations differentiate between the natures of their respective investigations. So it is that federal and local investigation departments are assigned different kinds of cases, and as a consequence, different kinds of interviews. Federal investigations as a result are typified by their complex and large-scale criminal cases that supersede the local forces. Local investigations deal with less complex and more locally oriented crime.

Since there are organisational difficulties associated with on-the-job training, such as the proximity of the coach, a purely organisational criterion was established. Seven experts working at the six different police departments, who were considered capable and willing to participate as a coach for the purposes of the study, were primarily put forward by the police force. Consequently the experienced interviewers to be coached by them also needed to be working in their police force for practical reasons. In addition this research sample has a self-selective character.

After introducing the research and its objectives in situ at the six different investigation departments of the participating coaches, 67 detectives showed an interest in participating. From these, 64 candidates were judged to be suitable, of which 63 interviewers started the research and 52 saw it through to completion. As such, we can report a relatively low drop out in the context of this research (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of participants per coach en per training condition.

Background coaches	Police department	Antwerp			Ghent			Mechelen	3
	Coaches	Coach 1	Coach 2	Coach 3	Coach 4	Coach 5	Coach 6	Coach 7	7
Organisation		Local	Federal	Federal	Local	Federal	Federal	Local / Federal	Local and Federal
T1 - Number of participants	Coached individually	4	4	4	6	4	4	6	32
	Coached in group	4	4	4	5	4	4	6	31
	Total	8	8	8	11	8	8	12	63
T2 - Number of participants	Coached individually	4	4	3	5	4	3	6	29
	Coached in group	2	3	4	3	3	3	5	23
	Total	6	7	7	8	7	6	11	52

#### 14 coaching groups

The sample structure was dominated by the division according to the participating

investigation departments. Each coach was assigned between four and six investigators per department for the individual coaching sessions and between four and six investigators for the group coaching sessions. In other words, each coach was responsible for both the individual and the one-day group training of his colleagues (Table 2). The exception was the federal investigation departments in Antwerp and Ghent, where two coaches took part in the research.

#### *Randomisation*

Studying a random sample of individuals is the most appropriate way to empirically test the efficacy of both interview training procedures. For this reason, participants (all of whom were voluntary) were assigned randomly of one of the two coaching procedures: 31 interviewers underwent one-day peer group coaching and 32 underwent individual coaching (Table 2). Before the present research started, the interviewers did not know which training they would undergo.

The parity of interviewing levels was ensured at the start of the study, so that any learning effect could be attributed to the actual training process. The participants were divided per investigation department into subgroups taking into account gender, age, number of years served and level of interview education. Subsequently, participants were assigned at random to one of the two training conditions. The core objective of the present dissertation is to study the experimental effect of newly developed training methods. As a consequence, this study does not assert any objectives that can be generalised to reflect the situation as encompassed by the investigative interviewing population as a whole. Neither sample is therefore explicitly representative of the actual population being studied. Due to the self-selecting and voluntary nature of the selection process of this study, we can characterise the participants as being motivated to optimise their interviewing skills, and we suspect that these people are therefore not necessarily representative of the group to which they belong, i.e. investigative interviewers in general.

Finally, during the data capture process, personal details and information were thoroughly coded, taking into account the conditions required to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. In the context of data manipulation and the final results, personal details cannot be traced to particular individuals by anyone apart from the researcher.

#### **4.2 The participants**

This study is rooted in the philosophy of competence development and management. This is a viewpoint that maintains that organisations benefit from the dissemination of internal know-how and that it is advantageous for the functioning and performance of the organisation, provided that this it takes place in a structured and efficient manner. In

order to guarantee the efficient dissemination of knowledge and expertise, such expertise is essential, as is a clear understanding of what it means. What does it mean to be an expert? What, how and who decides who is sufficiently knowledgeable and practised to be considered an expert? It is therefore crucial to distinguish between the two types of participants on the basis of their expertise. The two types of participants in this context are: (1) internal experts, i.e. those interviewers who, in the eyes of the police, are considered to be exceptionally experienced interviewers who have the capacity to pass on their expertise to less experienced colleagues and (2) experienced interviewers who are sufficiently motivated to further develop their own personal interviewing competences.

- (1) Because more investigative interviewing experience on the part of the coach will lead to higher level of coaching experience, Kiosogeous (2010) assumed that the more experienced the coach is in interviewing, the more effective he will be as a coach. Knowledge of a specific field such as investigative interviewing is not the only relevant factor. Other factors that may influence coaching effectiveness, alongside knowledge and know-how, such as status and ability, are discussed below. Although the term expertise not only encompasses the knowledge that a specific person has, it is essential that the coaches are primarily experienced interviewers, and representative as a source of interview expertise, and moreover are willing to pass on this expertise to colleagues within a well-defined training context.
- (2) Detectives who are willing to take part in the research, of their own accord and for extended periods', must be prepared to judge their interview skills critically and must be driven to improve their interview competences under the guidance of either a personal coach or their peers. Given that interviewers must be able to reflect on their own professional interview behaviour for the purposes of the course, it was essential that they had some experience in interviewing of suspects.

#### 4.2.1 The coaches

As work experience in general, and investigative interviewing expertise in particular, is a complex construct involving quantitative and qualitative dimensions as well as longitudinal perspectives (Day, 2010), it is remarkable that the profile of an interview trainer/coach has not yet been clearly defined in the literature. Frequently mention

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<sup>1</sup> Initially the duration of this experimental phase was set at six months, whereby the hypothetical expectation was that interviewers would be able to undergo personal progress during this period based on six monthly individual training sessions. In practice, this intervention phase was extended by one month, so that the individual coaching procedure last seven months in total. Organising individual sessions on a monthly basis was not always achievable, for both the interviewers and the coaches, given their busy schedules, pressures of work and the summer recess. As a consequence, those participants that had individual coaching underwent three to five sessions with their personal coach, over a period of seven months.

is made of a person having lots of experience and expertise when interviewing, in short: an expert (Powell, Wright & Clark, 2009; Sternberg et al., 2001). Yet what exactly does this concept 'expertise' mean and when is a person considered to be an expert? Is expertise attributed by objective and external criteria? Who and/or what determines when someone can be perceived an expert: people internal to the organisation or job, or external people outside the police organisation or criminal investigations? Or are the experts measuring themselves to assess this professionalism? Do status, knowledge, years of job related experience or certain competences equate to expertise? Or can expertise be defined by a combination of all?

First, the profile of the internal coach, as opposed to an academic or external expert, will be clarified in regard. Second, the predefined selection criteria the coaches need to succeed are described. Third, the factors that additionally influence whether interview trainees will accept their peer, interview trainer as a full and instructive coach, and consequently also how they define what expertise is, will be described.

#### *External versus internal expert?*

An expert is primarily a person who has ample experience through years of service in interviewing of suspects, victims and/or witnesses. Yet depending on whether this is an evidence-based versus best practices notion, two different expert types can be defined: an academic coach who mainly has an empirical background as opposed to an experienced police officer relying largely on a practical, job related background. For the purposes of effective training, it is important to make the appropriate selection: external or internal coach. Recently Powell, Fisher and Wright (2005) and others before them, stated that police officers could work scrupulously against their trainers and that they strongly prefer trainers and experts with broad experience and a background in investigative interviewing to mere theoretically educated experts (Memon, Milne, Holley, Koehnken & Bull, 1994; Powell, Fisher & Wright, 2005; Powell, Wright & Clark, 2009). When studying the relationship between scientists and practitioners on a meta-level, a remarkable aspect can be indeed noticed. For years and years both science and the police have jointly worked on optimising and professionalising the concept of 'policing', and interviewing in particular. In reality this shared objective is not always achieved, which is disappointing yet understandable. First, there is a difference in attitude between these organisations. Notwithstanding the fact that both cultures (academic versus police culture) probably have more common ground than is expected, for a number of decades the 'police culture' phenomenon has been the subject of scientific research. The police culture in the literature is defined as a typical yet dynamic phenomenon that among other things is characterised by a somewhat anti-intellectual attitude of the police officers (Van der Torre, 1999). This means that police officers, once integrated in the work field, will oppose

(whether or not they are forced by older peers) for example training and additional training (Chan, 2008). Police officers prefer to learn from practice and experience as they are convinced the police job can only be learned in the field. The opinion here is that the 'real' police work cannot be studied in schools. This might be expressed in a kind of resistance against experts, specialists or academics who, as is the case with police officers, want to optimise the interview quality (Memon et al., 1994; Van der Torre, 1999; Powell et al. 2005; Powell et al., 2009). It is understandable that investigative interviewers in new situations are inclined to follow their common sense and own expertise rather than rely on what they have encountered during a specialised training course. However, in general the interpretation of the police function, and the criminal investigation function in particular, by the police officers themselves, can be characterised by its conservative nature reflecting a somewhat limited register of knowledge to fall back on. From this it follows that in order for interviewers to use prescribed, theoretically based interview techniques, they have to be convinced that it has practical use and it is effective. Furthermore there is a paradoxical culture in the police field that can be described by phenomena such as competition and loyalty. Police people are extremely loyal to their own and this is noticeable in the strong 'we' feeling that they have, which makes it hard for external, non-police people to be a part of (Chan, 2008).

Secondly, the remarkable relationship between the police and science can be explained by the lack of a good communication between the parties. Both professions have a different background and past. Although they both talk about the same subject, they have different objectives. This means that their job has a different meaning and shape. Typical for this situation is the 'what works' approach versus an 'empirical-based' approach. These are two different dynamics that can generate areas of tension when working together in the field. Although both types of experts, external, academic and internal practitioners, have in common that they excel in certain areas of interviewing, the coaching results will be assumingly different depending on the use of the type of expert/coach.

When feedback is provided by internal experts for example, these hands-on experts can rely on personal practice experiences and anecdotes. The interviewers and the coach will consequently have a similar communication level. This has three benefits: First the coach has a high level of empathy; he immediately understands what the officer is talking about. Secondly, it is easier for the interviewer to identify himself with the coach and he understands better what the coach is trying to say. Thirdly, because of his expertise it is easier for the internal coach to indicate that he knows what he is talking about, so that the interviewer is more likely to accept this feedback. Besides, internal coaches do not have to travel for the coaching, if necessary investigative interviewers can pay an unannounced visit to the coach for advice prior to, for example, a complicated interview.

All these arguments all have to do with the status of the coach and as a result are all the consequence of the same dynamic: the recognition of expertise from within the organisation and the field of expertise. Coaches are awarded the status of coach by their fellow interviewers themselves this is an internal perception of expertise.

The research was designed to ensure internal experts and academics work together as well as possible. For this, the participating coaches (internal experts) were all highly experienced police officers, both in interviewing and teaching interview techniques to police detectives. The benefit of this choice is that the internal expert and the interviewer to be coached have a number of aspects in common, such as a similar background, a common reference frame and a similar manner of communicating. On the other hand this expert, as opposed to external experts, is not trained and lacks experience in giving people professional guidance and feedback. The internal experts were in their turn also trained by external specialists with a behavioural sciences background.

In preparation of the actual training procedures, this train-the-trainer construction is strongly recommended in order to train the internal experts in organising role-playing and the use of effective and clear communication when giving feedback. After all it is important that the feedback should unambiguous and comprehensible so that the investigative interviewer does not have questions about his performances. In the study by Warren et al. (1999) for example, investigative interviewers found the trainers' feedback to be insufficiently specific for them to adequately put their new skills into practice.

#### *Job requirements for the coach*

Firstly, it is understood that the coach is acquainted with adequate and reliable interview methods and techniques. Training expertise is of course also indispensable. As experience alone is assumingly not sufficient and is unlikely to on its own to accomplish the development of interviewers, we postulated a mean of approximately 20 years of interviewing experience and, additionally, approximately ten years of interview training experience. As argued in several studies done in different domains, it takes a minimum of 10 years of practice to reach expert status in a given field (Ericsson et al., 1993; Day, 2010). In addition there is evidence that older experts actively maintain specific skills through deliberate practice (Krampe & Charness, 2006).

Secondly, the coach should also be inclined to self-reflection and should be receptive to a critical introspective review of his personal coaching skills. The coach needs to undergo a similar type of process, so to speak, as the one that he is trying to realise with his interviewers. For this reason that training from one's own understanding is often more effective than working through a pre-defined training schedule. Being a good coach



therefore depends on a willingness and ability to learn from each experience. Coaching is a multifaceted process between the coach and the interviewer, where one can never be sure if results will go according to plan (Kiosoglous, 2010).

Thirdly, for good results it is important that the coach is flexible, takes the time and is supportive. Good coaches produce results by getting the best out of the people and by using available resources in their environment. Furthermore it is very important for the coach to create a good sense of safety and empathy with the interviewers in order to increase the interviewer's opportunities to learn (Pauwels, 2009).

Table 3. Selection criteria coaches

1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Advanced knowledge of theoretical background with regard to reliable interview methods and techniques</li> <li>&gt; Teaching experiences in the field of investigative interviewing</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Cooperate voluntarily and being motivated to self reflection</li> <li>&gt; Willing to be trained on their coaching techniques</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Being flexible and able to create a safe learning environment</li> <li>&gt; Willing to fulfill the coaching mandate correctly and with integrity</li> </ul>

### Coach's status

Although expertise here is defined in advance with the help of a job requirement description, describing different sub criteria, the prevalence of other factors also determine what is meant by being an expert in this context. These factors are seniority, educational background (internal versus external) and, as mentioned earlier, status or authority.

The experimental coaching showed us that the different coaches each have a personal way of coaching, all of them having both their effective and less effective coaching skills. Notwithstanding these personal ways of coaching, between the interviewers themselves we also observed differences in how expert feedback was received, depending on the status of the coach. The more the coach is perceived as an internal expert, the more seriously the interviewer will work with his feedback. As a consequence, the impact of the coaching also depends on the coach's status, derived from his service or working area. Based on our research observations it is possible to define three kinds of statuses: (i) status because of achievements, (ii) status because of a higher rank or grade, and (iii) status because of personal enthusiasm and dedication.

First, the coaches with a status based on achievement had already been contacted

regularly by peer interviewers prior to the present experiment, and to get advice regarding complicated interviews. These officers are perceived as experts by their peers, and superior because of their successful interviewing in the past, those that resolved cases. In the course of their career and following their successes, these officers have become experts and have been granted authority as interviewing experts within their office unit. These experts use their skills to help them attain a position in which they can offer services regarding preparation, execution, follow-up of videotaped interviews of suspects, witnesses and victims. Second, status is also derived from rank, on the one hand, but also the prior achievements by higher ranking officers. A third category of officers achieved their status as a coach because of their enthusiasm and unrestrained effort regarding everything that has to do with improving the interview quality. This enthusiasm lends prestige or respect alongside their know-how and the expertise they have built in the course of the years. It is understood that the three types of status can be combined and so strengthen the status of one and the same coach. An important remark when describing these three statuses is that the seven internal experts that participated in the study have one important component in common. Although the coaches work different police units in three different Belgian cities, for years they have been a 'team', optimising the quality of the Belgian police interviews. The coaches are all experts in investigative interviewing as well as experienced trainers in interview methods and techniques. A decade ago they founded and designed the Belgian Dutch-speaking interview training course taught at the national police academy and recently it was professionalised. For the sake of completeness we also note that the interviewer's acceptance of feedback also depends on the person of the interviewer. His acquired interview competences, communication skills and his attitude towards feedback will play an important role in this process.

Prior to starting the experimental real-life coaching, arrangements were made with the participating coaches regarding its outline. Not all arrangements were correctly observed, because according to the coaches some of them were not feasible. Other arrangements were agreed to, but in practice they were not observed. Without making a statement about which is the correct approach, the mutual presence of the two different dynamics (academic culture versus police culture) was quite noticeable. Although in practice this is not always evident, these findings are interesting because they give both parties the opportunity to learn from each other. It was clear that the coaches work in a mainly reactive way. Based on previous experience, attempts were made to get the most out of the coaching. The coaches use an approach that will be effective and there is little inclination to examine causalities. This differs from the external experts who are proactively interested to see how and why a particular training is more efficient than others. Generally speaking, however, the studied training methods were mainly proactively oriented. Based on current scientific knowledge about training skills, new

circumstances in order to professionalise the efficiency of the interview training and the coaching of the investigative interviewers in particular were consequently explored by both internal and external experts by continuously improving and renewing the training process.

Quite apart from whether the coach should be an internal versus an external expert, it may seem essential at this point to provide a description of the coach's job requirements. However these criteria are not as important as the status of the coach. As Ericsson et al. (1993) have noted, the more the trainer is perceived as an investigative interviewing authority, the more relevant his/her feedback is considered to be.

#### 4.2.2 The experienced interviewers

Although appropriate selection of participants results in a better chance of the training succeeding in optimising interview competences, in the context of the present study we were dependent on the participants volunteering and on their motivations for wanting to take part in scientific research.<sup>2</sup>

Despite this, we used a number of selection criteria to screen participants at the start of the study, to distinguish between suitable and less suitable candidates. We did this to ensure that the training had the best chance of success. The criteria used for this selection included: having at least two years experience as a detective and investigative interviewer; having the opportunity to actually conduct suspect interviews in practice; being willing to take part voluntarily; having no objections to join the non-individual, group training sessions; and finally serving with one of the investigation departments of the internal experts as described above. Volunteering and actively conducting interviews were two factors that were given particular weight. Since self-reflection is one of the most essential factors for developing expert performance, the interviewers had to be willing to advance their daily interview behaviour by spontaneously reflecting on their own personal interviewing skills in the presence of a coach. Evaluating and reflecting on professional interviewer behaviour in the presence of an expert are key factors for optimising personal interview performances and acquiring knowledge (Ericsson et al., 1993). For this reason, professional experience was deemed essential so that when evaluating professional interview behaviour, both one's own and one's colleagues, participants could fall back on their own accumulated experience.

<sup>2</sup> Although this study and the training courses that were organised as a result were driven by scientific objectives, this was not the perception of the participants. Despite the goal of the study being to measure the effectiveness of the coaching methods, the interviewers saw both training courses as an opportunity to learn and their participation was driven by a desire to learn by taking advantage of an opportunity to improve their interview skills rather than taking part in a scientific experiment. This ambiguous motivation was influenced by the status that various coaches enjoyed in the force in general and among their peer interviewers who were participating in particular. Those detectives who did not assign such expert status to their colleagues in the first place consequently did not sign up for this study.

Those considered unsuitable were officers who no longer conducted interviews and were mainly involved in administrative tasks, or were about to retire.

Table 4: Selection criteria participants

1	> Participate voluntarily
2	> Criminal investigation and interviewing experience of at least two years
3	> Employee of local or federal police of Antwerp, Ghent or Mechelen
4	> Willing to be trained (individually or in group)
5	> Interviewing must be part of the participant's job

#### *Motivation and voluntariness*

We do not expect that the coaching is suitable for every investigative interviewer because these innovative training procedures are demanding in terms of time and effort for both the coach and the interviewer. Police mentality will need to change regarding training and coaching before these new training procedures can be integrated into the interviewer's everyday police work. Interviews who sign up for coaching need to be willing to work constructively on their interview skills over a long period. Interviewers should be (inherently) motivated for this (Powell et al., 2005). The interviewer should be inclined to self-reflection and be open to a critical enquiry regarding his professional functioning. Unmotivated interviewers are therefore presumed more likely to stop prematurely and/or benefit less from the coaching. It is therefore important that participation is voluntary and this should be paramount during recruiting of interviewers.

The coach and/or the researcher both informally and formally informed several police units about the objectives of the coaching. Interviewers were then told that they could subscribe if they were interested. We noticed that some highly motivated coaches oversold the objective and aim of the survey to their peers. As a result some participants would probably not have signed up of their own accord. Consequently two types of participating interviewers could be defined: those who actually volunteered and the 'designated' volunteers. On the one hand there are the highly motivated interviewers who are willing to question their own professional functioning. These persons want to learn regardless, and they are convinced that they are well off with their coach. They show less resistance and regularly ask their coach for advice. On the other hand, from the start the 'designated' volunteers were more reluctant. However these investigative interviewers experienced both training procedures in such a positive way that they became motivated

as the training process progressed. These interviewers appreciated receiving feedback and thought it was a unique and most informative experience. But there were a few designated volunteers who partly lost their motivation along the coaching process. This was noticeable during the individual sessions when the interviewers showed resistance to offers for more comprehensive coaching. These interviewers give superficial answers to the coach's questions, play up to the coach, try to take over the conversation and/or fail to keep appointments. These observations confirm the findings of Powell, Fisher and Wright (2005) who emphasized that interviewers needed to be intrinsically motivated.

It appears that motivation is not the only component on which the impact of an individual coaching procedure depends. During one of the individual sessions, one of the interviewers announced that he was eager to train his interpersonal interview competences during his real-life interviews but that he cannot convince the team leader of his police unit to agree to this. In short the motivated interviewer needs to take into account that there may encounter resistance among his colleagues. Interviewers that are not coached emphasize for example the pressure of work and time that is inherent to police work, and that leave little room for practicing interview competences. This resistance means that it is not always easy for the coached interviewers to practice their skills.

### **4.3 The training interventions**

The aim of coaching experienced interviewers is to list and further develop their interpersonal interview competences with a view to improving their daily interviewing conduct. In order to study the effect of the coaching on the quality of the suspect interviews, we manipulated the intensity, capacity and quality of the feedback. For this we developed two training procedures: intensive individual coaching and a one-off group coaching session. During the group coaching session, we focussed on discovering and defining personal qualities and shortcomings in interviewing skills. We did this by taking examples from the methods used by their colleagues, putting learning from one's colleagues at centre stage. Once individual talents and shortcomings had been inventorised, the emphasis was placed on in-depth training in these interview qualities during one-on-one sessions with a personal coach. During these sessions, the coach and interviewer looked for reasons for these interview patterns, underlying factors and the consequences that they have for professional investigative interviewing conduct.

#### **4.3.1 One-day peer group coaching**

The first coaching intervention consisted of a one-day peer coaching meeting. The purpose of this single group training was to make interpersonal competences apparent by bringing together peers and the coach to learn from one another's performances and

by commenting and discussing one another's mistakes and strengths in interviewing suspects.

As authors have noted, the learner-centred method is preferable in training police officers, particularly when new behavioural skills, for example reliable interviewing methods, need to be learned (Conti, 1989; Birzer, 2003; McCoy, 2006). This is probably because this method closely follows the deliberate practice approach. This learner-centred method assumes that it is more effective to immediately and actively approach adult students, with the aid of specific interview situations which are related to real daily interview practices that interviewers are confronted with at work. In addition this method assumes that the trainer and the trainees proactively need to reach a mutual communication level that pays attention to discussion opportunities in the group. Here the interviewer is expected to be self-directed and self-motivated. Experiential learning techniques, like a group session where role-playing exercises are used to generate self, peer and expert feedback, are therefore in line with a learner-centred perspective of training adults.

The interviewers mainly gave feedback related to personal PICI competences, for example being able to handle pressure, being empathic, not being communicative enough or being complaisant, though comments on used methods and interview techniques, and how interviewers should solve certain interview dilemmas were also put forward.

As opposed to this method, a teacher-centred approach is defined by the fact that officers need to follow a specific training programme in a rather passive way. Moreover the effect of such education depends mainly on the teacher's activities during the course (Conti, 1989; Birzer, 2003; McCoy, 2006). Currently, the latter teaching approach is commonly used when training investigative interviewers. This method means that interviewers cannot distinguish between their actual interview performance, and the reliable new interview skills they are supposed to use. One reason for this is that they are not given sufficient opportunity to actually practice and discuss the advantages of these newly learned interview skills.

#### 4.3.2 Individual coaching

As opposed to group coaching, individual coaching was organised in individual settings between the interviewer and the coach. The purpose of this setting was to improve personal interview competences, confidence, attitude and skills by applying expert knowledge. This was done using individual performance coaching which interviewers needed to reflect on their daily interview performances, and needed to brief the coach about their desired and undesired interview competences.

Since little attention is paid in current interview training programmes to the interpersonal capacities of the interviewers themselves, this coaching condition focussed particularly on training interpersonal interview competences. This procedure therefore did not consist of a standardized training programme as used by previous evaluation studies. Instead, this coaching consisted of custom-made, personalized individual coaching sessions with the focus on one or two PICI competences which were characteristic for the interviewer. Because each interviewer has his own strengths and weaknesses, competences were not necessarily typical for every interviewer. The training procedure started from the idea that intrinsic interview capabilities need to be assessed first, and then should be further developed in order to establish a long lasting learning impact. In this training procedure we therefore deliberately chose to allow the interviewers to define these competences themselves.

The coaching investment here resembles commitment of investigative interviewers to deliberate practice. Expert advice was put into practice in several ways, for example role-plays during the coaching sessions itself, where the coach played the suspect. But advice was also tried out in practice during real interviews by the interviewers themselves.

Role-plays are not only good for generating feedback, this technique can also be used to re-examine bottleneck issues that the interviewer was confronted with in real interviews. Role-plays are a useful and efficient educational tool because the coach can (a) directly anticipate the police officer's skills during the role-play, and can (b) pause and subsequently resume the role-play when giving concrete feedback (Pauwels, 2009). In this way specific competences can be used and optimised right on the spot. Hence this will enable the interviewer to repeat particular competences until they become entrenched since the same role-play can be repeated if necessary. In this way the coach will not be solely dependent on the interviewer's perceptions. Instead, by using concrete examples he will be able to focus on issues that need attention. In addition the coach works on moving the interviewer to the next level, not through role-plays alone, but by encouraging self-criticism, and in-depth self-reflection on the part of the interviewer (Ericsson et al., 1993).

#### 4.3.3 Customised feedback

In the evaluation studies discussed earlier, a lack of precision in reporting about the content of the investigated interview training and feedback resulted in a lack of transparency and ambiguity whereby terms such as supervision, role-play, expertise, experience and follow-up are insufficiently elucidated. Content and information are lost as a consequence. In order to clarify these issues, we elucidate the structure of the individual coaching and the content of the sessions, with a view to making it clear and intelligible.

As noted in the introduction and chapter two, the PICI has been assigned various roles in this study, depending on the objectives. On the one hand, PICI has an important role to play as an assessment instrument in which interpersonal interview skills are inventoried and quantified. On the other hand, the PICI is used as an evaluation instrument to analyse the success and effectiveness of both coaching procedures. Finally, the 40 PICI items are also used to give the training sessions of both coaching procedures content. We will discuss this last role, the PICI as a development instrument, in greater depth below. The main objective of the coaching is to improve interpersonal interviewing skills. The coaching procedure therefore started with a group assessment followed by individual sessions where initially both the coach and the interviewer defined points of special interest based on the assessment results. This was followed by defining two clear PICI competences by the interviewer himself reflecting these points of special interest. Subsequently these two interview competences were coached for seven months with a coaching frequency between 3 to 5 individual sessions.

Training interviewers in a one-to-one interaction was preferred, where both the coach and the interviewer could fully focus on improving the interview competences of the interviewer. Individual coaching sessions between the coach and the interviewer were organised in the workplace. The content of the coaching sessions consisted mainly of discussing personal interview competences in relation to the interviewer's daily interview performances. In this way, the training could be related directly to problems in their working lives.

During the individual coaching sessions, priority was given to the further development of the selected PICI competences. In line with the working definition of a good interview, attention was paid to the interviewers' basic interview conduct, such as asking open questions and making contact with the suspect (issues that we know increase the reliability of the information, as noted previously). Moreover, we also took into account various behavioural factors, such as attitudes, habits and quirks peculiar to the interviewer. For example, one of the interviewers learned to stop fiddling nervously with his pen. In conclusion, we note that we primarily coached specific PICI competences, using the PICI as a guide to give the coaching process substance, while at the same time paying particular attention to the interpersonal aspects of the interviewer and their basic interviewer behaviour. As such, this programme constitutes customised, individual coaching sessions.

#### 4.3.4 Train the trainer

##### *Content of train-the-trainer course*

Despite the fact that investigative interviewing literature hardly considers the actual



content of such terms as expertise, professionalism and experience, a number of researchers have tried to discover why it is that some top athletes perform better expertise than others for instance, sprinters or chess masters and the circumstances that distinguish these individuals from mediocre people and athletes (Ericsson, 1996). Kiosoglous (2010) concludes that coaches and trainers play an important part in top sporting achievements. He also claims that a good coach must not only be aware of everything to do with his particular sport or field. A good coach reflects different domains of understanding rather than just professional sports knowledge; it reflects professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal expertise. Kiosoglous discusses an holistic approach to coaching, one in which those in training must integrate their knowledge of these various aspects in order for the coaching to be effective, and for the individual's expertise to be institutionalised. Below we outline the descriptions of these aspects are proposed by Kiosoglous (2010). The term professional knowledge is defined as the factual information about a particular concept, such as investigative interviewing procedures including the various interviewing phases and reliable techniques and methods that are necessary to conduct suspect interview adequately.

The second aspect, interpersonal knowledge, is defined as a complex process in which social interactions are central and responsible for acquiring well-refined communication skills. It is these communication skills that reflect the coach's interpersonal capacities and that are responsible for the relationship between the coach and the interviewer. During this professional relationship, the coach must continually keep a balance between the various roles, and he must approach the trainee not only as a professional police interviewer but also as an individual, separate from police work. According to Kiosoglous (2010) this balance influences the trainee's performance. It is a balance that is typical of this relationship: it varies per trainer and is geared to the needs and requirements of the interviewer. In short, interpersonal knowledge that is applied in the relationship between the coach and the interviewer affects the interviewer's performance.

Finally, intrapersonal knowledge refers to the coach's flexibility and capacity for introspection and self-reflection. These are important attributes that every coach should have. The process of reflecting on one's own professional conduct is defined as the mechanism that ensures that experience is translated into knowledge. This typifies the experiential learning approach. It is the coach in particular who ought to have undergone this process of turning experience into coaching knowledge. According to Kiosoglous (2010), expertise is therefore dependent on the integration of the knowledge in the categories described above.

As noted, the objective of coaching interviewers in this context is to gain insight into

creating professional interview behaviour on the part of individuals in which, depending on their inherent potential, developing and optimising their interpersonal interview competences is central. Earlier we defined coaching as a combination of training on the one hand and mentoring and personal counselling on the other hand. This working definition classifies coaching as being skilled in interviewing as well as being capable of adequately guiding and counselling other individuals. In this, it strongly resembles the three aspects of expertise as above described.

As discussed previously, the selection process for recruiting coaches had a self-selection character in which a key figure in the police force, who was also one of the coaches, recruited the other six coaches from a prominent group of police interview trainers from the federal police academy. This met the first requirement of our coaching approach, namely that candidates should be professional interviewers. The other factors that coaches are required to master (mentoring and counselling), factors that would ensure that the individual development process is initiated, were not explicitly covered by this, i.e. counselling versus guiding people through material in which one is an expert.

This automatically implies that interview experts, as described in the literature must be experts in various domains simultaneously: (1) investigative interviewing, both in the theory and practice – i.e. they must be experienced. For this, they are required to stay abreast of current developments, the latest insights and findings do to with suspect interviewing and how it is carried out. (2) Coaches are also required to be experts in the field of coaching and how they can guide others adequately to achieve the next level of personal expertise. This requires that coaches have skills such as: a number of basic skills and attitudes to do with communication; being able to apply counselling methods during the coaching process; being able to detect individual interview competences among the colleagues being coached and guiding them insightfully; being able to support and optimise those interpersonal qualities and competences that the individuals have; being able to create a safe and secure working atmosphere during the coaching process; and being able to persuade the colleagues they are coaching to reflect on their own skills and capabilities. They should also be respectful and have integrity during the coaching process; they should work from a position of trust; be empathetic in achieving the goals of the coaching; have a flexible attitude when coaching and be motivated to engage with those they coach.

In order to convey these skills, the external train-the-trainer course comprised two consecutive parts. The course started with a three day theory course and role-playing

exercises<sup>3</sup> under the instruction of an external coaching expert. Next, the training comprised follow-up sessions during which the internal coaches were in turn coached in monthly sessions by two academic experts with social science backgrounds (one of whom was the researcher). During these follow-up sessions, new coaching techniques were presented, and the use of techniques already introduced were discussed and evaluated. Issues that had arisen in practice were also discussed.

Apart from being present during the various pre and post coaching assessment sessions,<sup>4</sup> the researcher also observed individual coaching sessions. While the observed sessions were chosen at random, attention was paid to the sequence in terms of content and the chronological structure of the coaching. Moreover, coaches were asked to report in writing about the course and substance of the individual sessions so that for each interviewer a file delineating his or her interview potential could be compiled. The written evaluation was structured using a standard reporting form designed by the researcher. These observations and written reports had three advantages. In the first place they allowed the researcher to safeguard the empirical quality of the research as well as ensuring the standardisation (as far as possible) and organisational aspects of the study. Secondly, these observations and reports also enabled the researcher to fine-tune the subjects to be discussed during the follow-up days to the needs and requirements of the internal coaches. Thirdly, it allowed the discussions regarding bottleneck issues during the follow-up sessions to be tested against what the coaches had actually experienced during the coaching sessions. Although the coaches were trained in group, this allowed for certain aspects of the train-the-trainer course to be customised in line with the philosophy behind the individual coaching for the interviewers.

In total, 113 individual coaching sessions with seven coaches were organised for the 63 interviewers. Furthermore, external experts supervised six follow-up days held over a period of seven months.

The course material for 'Role-play as a technique for coaches and their groups', organised by the University College Ghent, the material and documentation used during the follow-up sessions (for the purposes of the train-the-trainer course) and the written reports from the coaches of the individual sessions can all be obtained from the researcher.

<sup>3</sup> Given that a conscious choice was made to use fictitious interviews using actors during the pre and post coaching assessments, the coaches went on the course entitled 'Role-play as a technique for coaches and their groups', organised by the department SOAG of the University College Ghent.

<sup>4</sup> The researcher was responsible for the practical development and organisation of these assessment sessions. This entailed: booking police interviewing rooms and equipment for videotaping the interviews; adapting cases for the role-play to suit the research objectives; approaching professional actors; inviting and instructing the people involved, giving them their interview case on time so that they had time to prepare for the role-play; and making sure the taped interviews were given to the interviewer and the coach. For more information, see the discussion of the research design below.

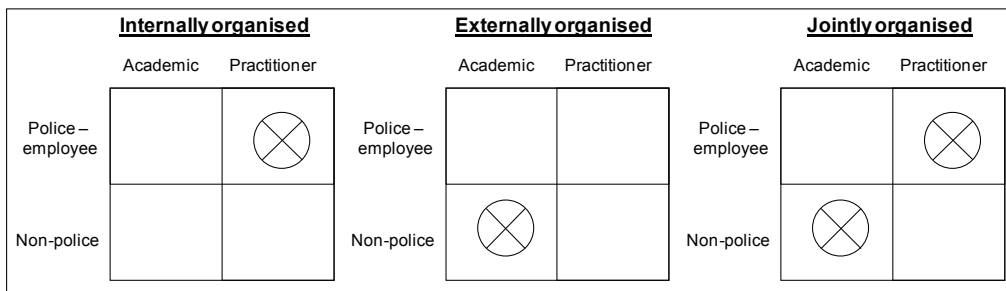
*Internal/external collaboration*

As described in the section concerning job requirements of the coach, in which we touched on whether the profile of the expert should depend on an *evidence based* versus a *best practice* philosophy, we deliberately opted for close collaboration between internal and external experts for the purposes of this study. This cross-pollination occurs because of the collaboration between the federal and local police forces on the one hand and the University of Ghent and University College Ghent on the other. The course on communication and role-play for use in coaching groups and individuals, organised by the University College, was the basis for the course for the internal coaches, and as such was the third training course designed especially for this study. The content of this training course will be discussed below.

We designed this collaboration from the conviction that, despite their expertise and experience as coaches of interviewers, these detectives needed to be taught about mentoring and counselling as described above so that they could be considered fully-fledged interview coaches.

Taken as against the background of the research as a whole, however, this cross-pollination was deliberately kept low-key, and it was the internal coach in particular who played a prominent role for the interviewers in this empirically designed training project. We did this for the following reasons.

Figure 3: Type of expert based on background and relation with the police organisation



- i. The collaboration between internal versus external, and police versus academics was motivated by completely different reasons than, for example, the in house organising of the training course by either police experts or by experts with an academic background hired by the police (internal academic experts) (figure 3). Compared to internal/external collaboration, we assume that the gains from in house organisation (with its internal cross-pollination in an organisation such

as the police force) may not offer the same potential for optimal development (which brings with it more chance of benefits). The danger when using in house organisation alone is that, in time, the link with external, new insights and knowledge from the academic world and/or social dialogue may not be sufficiently guaranteed. Confronting police practices with reality outside the force, and keeping abreast of developments on all fronts, is crucial. If this does not happen, is there not a danger that this will be to the detriment of the efficacy and goals of the trainings project?

2. Another reason why this cross-pollination between the police and science was not put centre stage as far as the interviewers were concerned (in favour of the focus being on interviewer expertise and know-how being passed on to a younger generation of officers in an empirically tested and in a structured manner) was to comply with the wishes of the police. The police force is convinced of the value of this method of passing on know-how and tends to look for interview expertise, and organise training sessions, internally. Allowing such knowledge and internally garnered interviewing skills to be lost is indeed not advisable and may constitute a loss to the organisation. However, an external reality check by way of this kind of collaboration is essential if the organisation is to continue growing in line with developments from other fields.
3. The other options as illustrated in Figure 3, such as out sourcing the training of investigation related activities completely, is also not advisable because this does not make the most of internal know-how. This is why we deliberately opted for an internal/external combination, not only from the point of view of an evidence based policing principle, but particularly to give the current COP philosophy a better grounding in the impact that competency management ideals have on police practices. The despecialisation principles of the COP philosophy rests on the assumption that calling on specialisation when executing specific cases that require such specialism, such as optimising investigative interviewing and institutionalising interview coaches, is not desirable. Training internal interview coaches concurs with this.
4. Fourthly, internal/external collaboration is directly linked to the holistic coaching approach in which interview coaches are required not only to be knowledgeable about investigative interviewing in its broadest sense, but must also pay attention to coaching capacities that are inherently linked to interpersonal and intra-personal capacities, as described in the section about the third course, train-the-trainer.

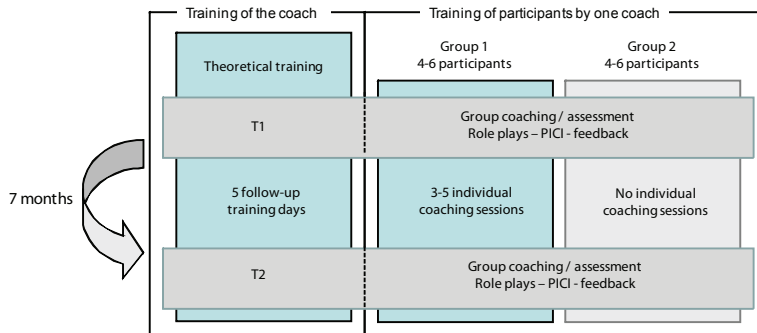
Although little emphasis has been given thus far to the third training course, in which internal experts are trained to be internal interview coaches, this does not detract in

any way from its importance or the importance of its scope to this research. On the contrary, the organisation of this course makes it possible to study empirically the effect of individual versus group coaching of interviewers. Without this course we would only be discussing internal experts, and not fully-fledged interview coaches.

#### 4.4 Pre and post coaching design

Upon completion of the first research project, with its goal of validating the PICI, the second project commenced. This phase had an experimental design, comprising two consecutive research phases during which assessments were made pre (T1) and post (T2) the individual coaching interventions. By assessing the coaching in this way it was possible to evaluate the effect of the training procedures empirically.

Figure 4: The pre and post coaching design



At the start of the coaching research, participants were invited to take part in an assessment session which entailed a pre coaching interview during which interview skills and internal potential were noted (T1). Subsequently, half of the participants underwent individual coaching for a period of seven months. On completion of the coaching course, all participants were assessed again (T2) by way of a post coaching interview. See Figure 3. The assessment sessions consisted of role-playing after which information was gathered using the 360 degree feedback method, PICI assessments and verbal feedback from the interviewer, his colleagues, the coach, the fictitious suspect (an actor) and the researcher.

##### 4.4.1 Role-play assessments

###### *The interview cases*

The fictitious suspect's interviews consisted of role-playing with professional actors. The coaches developed these role-plays and based them on their own experiences with real life suspect interviews. Written scenarios were composed based on their experiences

of actual cases. The content of these real-life scenarios were then adapted to suit the research purposes and presented to the actors. Elements that concerned the suspect's life story and past, in other words, their back story, were included in the cases through specific instructions to the actors. Consequently the scenarios contained guidelines regarding how the 'suspects' needed to behave in order to elicit the PICI competences. The actors were instructed to only make a confession when this was a logical consequence of the interviewer's performance. In total 12 different scenarios were composed (six for the assessment interview and six for the development interview). See also Appendix A. Here is an example of these instructions.

#### Case 4 (Tr) - Carpenter

##### Instructions for the actor.

*'... As the suspect, you feel accused and initially you don't think this is right. You are an honest businessman and you think it's outrageous that they've made you come to the police station. You've worked hard your whole life and have always made an honest living. You are outraged and you let them know it. You behave arrogantly and make it clear that you think the interviewer is incompetent. You are the victim, after all. By behaving in this way, you try to distract the interviewer and get on his/her nerves. You try to make the interviewer behave in a high-handed/severe way that could be described by attributes from the DOMINANT-INSISTING dimension.*

*The situation in which you find yourself (prime suspect in a case, and under interrogation at the police station) starts to make you feel desperate. Now you're getting angry.. By getting angry you try to put pressure on the interviewer to let him believe that you are the victim. You carry on behaving like this unless the interviewer is so understanding and empathetic that remaining angry would not be a natural, realistic reaction or consequence to the interviewer's intervention. This angry reaction is intended to elicit a response from the interviewer that can be described as patient, restrained, able to handle stress and so on, all interview competences that are categorised as CONTROLLED-NON-REACTIVE.*

*This angry behaviour is also intended to test how capable the interviewer is in situations like this to react according to the PICI attributes of SYMPATHETIC and/or SENSITIVE/COMMUNICATIVE. ...'*

#### The role-play interviews

Role-playing is an efficient educational technique and part of the experiential learning approach in which interviewers can acquire skills, competences, attitudes and communication techniques. These are techniques that concern interaction with a third

party, and in the context of role-playing they can be learned without the suspect being present (Pauwels, 2009). Fictitious interviews carried out using role-play enable us to acquire skills in a realistic way without ethical consequences or consequences for the police force. Despite this, using role-play and gathering feedback in this way is linked too often these days to its 'inhibiting' character, resulting in the advantages of this training method being undervalued. Creating a safe learning environment is essential and an important, primary task for the coach. It is important that these learning opportunities are experienced as positive since only if they are positive will they result in a stable and lasting change in behaviour and/or attitude.

There are various ways to organise role-play, including working with professional actors or professional training actors. Working with professional (training) actors, as opposed to co-trainees, makes the exercise more realistic and the interviewer is more likely to respond accordingly. Professional actors are better able to place themselves in the role of a suspect (Powell et al., 2008). Training actors are actors that have been trained to do role-playing as a training technique and as such are able to steer the interview using communication, getting the most out of the fictitious interview and as such increasing the educational component. The advantage that training actors have is that they can steer the interview more precisely, based on instructions given by the coach prior to the interview (Pauwels, 2009; Van Hasselt, Romano & Vecchi, 2010). This research used various professional actors and student actors during the pre coaching assessments. During the post coaching assessments, a training actor was used in the role-plays. This facilitated an evaluation of the competences that the individually coached interviews had been taught, and as such any progress that had been accomplished was highlighted.

The case scenarios were sent to the participants by e-mail three days prior to the assessments so that they could prepare themselves and so that the role-play would be more realistic. This gave the participants the opportunity to study the fictitious case file and prepare themselves thoroughly for the role-play.

#### 4.4.2 360 degree feedback and the PICI assessment

##### *Assessment intervals T1 en T2*

The assessment intervals are an important aspect of this study because this is when the PICI information and feedback was gathered. Gathering the data correctly is essential for reliable and valid results, particularly where this concerns synchronising the organisation of the various subgroups on the one hand, and the two assessment intervals on the other hand.

The assessment intervals were organised per coach and the relevant participants and



were carried out over a number of days. The assessment sessions for those coached individually versus those coached in groups were done independently of each other. By comparing the data and the results gathered during T1 and T2 for the two types of groups, we attempted to study the learning effect of the various coaching methods empirically. Though, the research was designed so that other research issues to do with the PICI, such as the differences in self-assessments and assessments of peers could also be studied.

### *360 degree feedback technique*

The focus during the assessment intervals was on role-play, PICI assessments, including self-assessment, and feedback so that, apart from meeting their empirical objectives, the assessment sessions could also function as one-day group coaching sessions. The 360 degree feedback principle was used to structure these various activities (Table 4).

The 360 degree feedback method is a competence management technique that is used to assess the individual competences related to specific functions based on feedback from, for example, management, staff, colleagues and/or external consultants. This principle is based on a clock-around system in which each individual is given consideration after interview skills are demonstrated using role-play. Professional conduct is judged on the basis of feedback given by others and the individual themselves. After each interview, PICI scores were therefore collected. The participants were asked to score the observed interview performance using the 40 PICI competences, on a five point scale. After this, verbal feedback was given to each individual, in an open and face-to-face situation. This multi-evaluator assessment technique is based on an open feedback system that offers interesting possibilities in terms of systematic comparisons between self-assessment and peer assessment. The aim of this technique is to initiate a self-management process and it is therefore appropriate that it takes place before an individual training course (Van Beirendonck, 1998).

The 360 degree feedback method uses assessments taken at two consecutive points in time to map any progress that may have taken place. With the empirical objectives in mind, external or 'new' evaluators should ideally be used at both points in time. Using the same evaluators for T1 and T2 could be qualified as subjective or unsound. The same evaluators may be inclined to form an opinion of a person during the first assessment that could influence their perception during the second assessment. On the other hand, the same evaluators may well detect progress in their colleagues after the significant interval of seven months. This would not be possible for external evaluators given that they would not be aware of how the interviewer performed prior to the training. Although using external, objective evaluators for empirical, assessment purposes is prudent, we opted in the context of this study to use evaluators that were to hand, namely peer interviewers,

alongside a few external evaluators, such as the actor and the researcher. We did this partly for organisational purposes, but particularly because the focus was on teaching and institutionalising the learning process. Organising the group coaching sessions (assessment sessions T1 and T2) with evaluators that do not stand to benefit directly from the educational component of the feedback would be inefficient and wasteful in terms of a cost-benefit analysis. It would prevent colleagues from learning from one another's interview achievements.

Table 4: 360 degree feedback instructions for the coaches

1	> The coach invites the first interviewer to take part in a role-play exercise (the interview)
2	> The interviewer can prepare for the role-play while the coach discusses the case with the actor (and instructs him/her if necessary) (10 min.)
3	> Role-play interview (45 min.)
4	> Fill in PICI (10 min.)
5	> Short feedback interviewer
6	> Short feedback colleague interviewers
7	> Short feedback actor
8	> Short feedback coach (in total 20 min. feedback per person)

This procedure is then repeated with the next interviewer until everyone has had a turn. The sequence of the interviewers (whose turn it is) is on a voluntary basis and the interviewers can decide for themselves at the time.

At the end of the assessment session each person is required to watch the video recordings of their own interview again and allow the feedback to 'sink in' (reflect on it). The coach will refer to this feedback during the individual coaching sessions.

Source: Smets, L. (2009). Manual for individual coaching of police interviewers: Assessment and development of interview competences [Unpublished manual]. Ghent: University of Ghent.<sup>5</sup>

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## Appendix A

Summary of the scenarios that were used for Assessment Tr

1. On Saturday afternoon, a hit and run accident took place. A cyclist is hit by a car and the driver does not stop. The cyclist is injured but is not in a life-threatening situation. A few days later a woman turns herself in to the local police station. She claims that she was the one who caused the accident with the cyclist but that she drove off in panic. An investigation in the neighbourhood reveals that her 18 year old son, who has no driver's licence, regularly takes his mother's car, without permission, to drive to his girl friend's house. He only does this when his father is away on business.
2. The manager of the public swimming pool files a report. Apparently a few visitors have complained to her that a certain person has an unhealthy interest in young girls who spend time in and around the swimming pool. Also, two underage girls claim that they were molested by a man when they were under the showers. A check of the national register shows that this man has a prior record of paedophilia. The records show that his wife had filed a complaint during their divorce proceedings saying that he had sexually molested their underage daughters.
3. For the third time in the space of a few months, the firm Tabaco, a wholesaler in cigarettes and tobacco, has been robbed. For the third time, a truck carrying a large consignment of supplies is forced off the road and stopped by two cars. Three or four masked and armed men force the driver out of his cab and steal the shipment. The business owner claims during his interview that he has done everything possible to prevent the robberies. The routes that the chauffeurs are supposed to take change each time and the owner is the one who chooses them. He tells the chauffeurs himself which route to take as they are about to leave. If the owner is not around when they are ready to leave, he gives the route to his assistance, who then hands them over to the chauffeurs.
4. The local police are called in by the owner of a carpentry business. He claims that he was attacked but that he was able to subdue the attacker. The police arrive at the scene to discover that the attacker is already dead. Even though the owner claims that he had already locked up shop, there are no signs of breaking and entering. The attacker turns out to be a notorious cocaine dealer and a friend of the owner's son.
5. A case is opened by Jan and his sister Bea against their brother Marc and his wife Anneliese for embezzling of their inheritance. Their mother Louise, a widow, passed away two months previously. When the heirs (Jan, Bea and Marc) were called to the

solicitor for the reading of the will, it became clear that their brother, Marc, had already taken possession of some of the goods (paintings, antique silver items and a few pieces of jewellery). Marc and his wife Anneliese had had ample opportunity to take these things because that had been in the mother's home often, to check up on her and to bring her food and so on. They even had keys to her home. The claimants want the valuable items to be returned.

6. This case was filed by a couple against their babysitter, Kristien. Kristien has regularly babysat the couple's six month old daughter. She had recently been to look after the baby, the night of Saturday to Sunday because the couple wanted to attend a wedding. Without saying anything, she left on Sunday morning. On Sunday, the parents noticed that their baby was unusually quiet and kept vomiting when they tried to give her her bottle. They took the baby to hospital straight away, where the emergency rooms diagnosed a fractured skull with possible permanent damage. The father called Kristien immediately and asked her what had happened that night. Kristien claims that the baby slept through the night without incident. In the report, the father also stated that the neighbours had noticed that Kristien had a young man visit her while she was babysitting.

Summary of the scenarios that were used for Assessment T2

1. This file starts with a fire that broke out in a pigeon coop. The fire spreads to the house and as a result an elderly inhabitant is seriously, but not fatally, burnt. Her husband is not harmed. The house is in a building complex. According to the fire expert, the fire in the pigeon coop may have been a result of arson. He suspects that spirits may have been used to start it. From the husband's first statement, it appears that he has had an altercation with the neighbour who lived in the house behind theirs. This neighbour is a widow who moved there with her fourteen year old daughter a couple of years previously. Her back yard backs onto the garden of the house that burnt down. Several times she has claimed that his pigeons make a mess of her house and terrace with their droppings. A neighbourhood investigation reveals that several neighbours have a problem with the pigeons. Moreover, it turns out that the widow was particularly angry with her neighbour because she suspects that he may have killed her daughter's kittens.
2. A complaint from the bank manager states: A wealthy client has reported that €100,000 left her account without her knowledge. This took place at a time when she was visiting family abroad. The management conducted an internal investigation into the matter. It turns out that this amount was drawn from the account by an authorised cheque. The authorisation signature on the cheque is not that of the client. The cheque was presented to bank clerk Anneleen C. Anneleen knows the client personally. Moreover, Anneleen is known at the bank for being an extremely thorough teller who always

checks the signature and identity of the client. The management calls for the video recording of the bank counter that day to see if they can establish who it was that presented themselves to draw the 100,000. It emerges that there were no recordings taken that day due to a camera defect.

3. Dr Mertens, a radiologist, files a complaint against one of his staff members, the secretary. Dr Mertens has a private clinic for radiology and other medical scans. He employs a nurse, a medical secretary and an administrator. After about a month, he starts to get regular complaints from his patients. It turns out that fourteen of his patients discovered that they had things missing after a visit to his clinic, either money from their purses, or bank cards that were used to make purchase that same day, in some cases jewellery went missing. The amounts were always small, sometimes insignificant. A camera was installed in the changing rooms but the burglar was never caught on camera. And yet the complaints kept coming. The nurse and the administrations person mention that a rumour has been circulating that Dr Mertens (a married man) has been having an affair with the secretary for more than a year.
4. A murder was committed in a nursing home. One of the residents, an elderly woman, was given a fatal dose of medicine used by vets to put down animals. One of the doctors who worked for the nursing home spotted it the small entry point of the injection. The day before the woman died, her husband paid her a visit. It was known that he was the sole beneficiary of her estate. Not only that, it was common knowledge that he was having an affair with another woman from the village. However, during investigations with the personnel from the nursing home it emerged that another resident had been sharing a dinner table with the victim from the time she came to the nursing home. It seems as though the two got on very well with each other, although some of the other residents had their doubts about this. Without giving her reasons, the day before the victim died she announced to the management that she no longer wanted to share a table with her friend.
5. Three days ago, the remains of Natasha were found on the grounds of an abandoned factory. She had been murdered. The autopsy revealed that she had gunshot wounds to the chest and the back of the head. It was known that Natasha worked as a call girl for Boris who, together with his accomplice Youri, who ran an escort service. Natasha shared an apartment with her best friend, Corina, who also worked as a prostitute for Boris and his gang. An investigation in the neighbourhood brought to light that two men had removed a few items (a carpet, a cupboard and a couple of other things) from the apartment and taken them away in a small van. A search of Natasha and Corina's flat revealed little except that the flat had been thoroughly cleaned not that long ago. From photographs found in the flat it was established that the two girls had been best friends from an early age. It was Corina who first became a prostitute and she, with talk of 'easy money' and living the high life, managed to persuade Natasha to join her

in a life as a call girl.

6. An owner of a clothes shop has been the victim of shoplifting several times during the past two weeks. A number of luxury items, such as a leather jacket, a fur wrap, an expensive handbag and a cashmere coat, have disappeared from the shop. The shop owner explained that expensive items had been stolen regularly before, but never at this rate. Because a new company had been running a special promotion for alarm systems, he invested in a new, and according to the information given to him, better alarm system. The person who supplied the alarm assured him that the tags were extremely difficult to remove, yet the tags had apparently been meticulously taken off the clothes and accessories and left in various places around the shop. The owner reports that the sales assistant noticed that one of their regular customers has been in the shop almost every day. It turns out that this woman tried a lot of garments on, but that she ended up buying relatively few items.





# Chapter 5.

# The feasibility and practica- bility of police training

Investigative interviewers perceptions  
towards coaching

This chapter is paper 2 published as:

Smets, L. & Pauwels, C. (2010). The feasibility and practicability of police training: Investigative interviewers' perceptions towards coaching. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management*, 33 (4), 664-680.

## Abstract

*Purpose* – Although there is an international consensus concerning how police investigative interviews should be adequately and reliably conducted, daily police interview practices are still rather poor. It is hypothetically assumed that this may be caused by unsatisfactory interview training programmes. The purpose of this paper is to focus on a new type of interviewing training, the individual coaching project, where interpersonal interview competences are being defined and optimised.

*Design/methodology/approach* – Building upon previous studies, this paper reflects the outcome of an elaborate process concentrated on exploring new investigative interview training opportunities.

In addition the interviewer's perceptions of feedback and mentoring were evaluated in order to study the feasibility and practicability of the individual coaching project.

*Findings* – Results showed that 72 per cent of the participating interviewers were very eager about their project participation. Almost all interviewers thought the coaching project was very worthwhile and instructive, and believed they really developed and optimised their interview skills.

*Originality/value* – The present paper innovatively contributes to the current discussion concerning investigative interviewing and training by concentrating and defining the role and necessity of ongoing feedback. Moreover this paper concentrates on the content of this new training project, which can be of high interest for the daily police interview practices.

**Keywords:** Competences, Training, Police, Coaching, Role play, Interviews Paper type Conceptual paper

### 5.1 Introduction

Multidisciplinary investigative interviewing research completed during the last past decades has resulted in a knowledge base for interviewing witnesses, suspects, victims and children which is strongly focused on obtaining truthful information through the use of non-suggestive and non-coercive interview methods. These methods apply interview techniques such as using open-ended questions (and avoiding suggestive, leading questions (Milne and Bull, 1999)), eliciting a free recall through the use of narrative non-verbal techniques (Baldwin, 1993), building rapport and having an open empathic attitude (Williamson, 1993; Read et al., 2009). Consequently this research led to a substantial consensus concerning how to conduct reliable police interviews.

Moreover, this resulted in the understanding that investigative interviewing of suspects requires expertise and training instead of learning by practices in the field as done in the past (Yuille, 1986; Gudjonsson, 2002; Bull and Milne, 2004; Powell et al., 2009). Unsupervised observation of older colleagues for example, does not necessarily mean that interviewing skills are being taught in a correct and adequate way (Aldridge and Cameron, 1999). Accordingly police investigative interviewing guidelines and trainings have been organised and professionalised. As a result evidence-based interviewing became widely used. In the UK, the Cognitive Interview methodology for example is integrated in the PEACE model. This model needs to provide police interviewers with a framework, which they can use to guide themselves through the different phases of an interview (Dando, 2010). The initials of the PEACE protocol stand for every phase the interviewer chronologically needs to cover during an interview:

- . Planning.
- . Explaining to the suspect.
- . Account from the suspect.
- . Closure.
- . Evaluation.

Nevertheless, interviewers who make use of reliable interview techniques are still not very common (Williamson, 1993; Aldridge and Cameron, 1999; Warren et al., 1999; Lamb et al., 2000, 2002; Wright and Powell, 2007; Powell et al., 2008; Dando, 2010). This rather poor usage of interview techniques in daily police practices could be assumed to be caused by inefficient interview training programmes (Powell et al., 2009). The last past year's investigative interview training programmes are therefore being studied internationally. Consequently these studies have led to a new type of interviewing studies in which training programmes are empirically evaluated. In our opinion two types of evaluation studies can be currently distinguished:

- (1) Reactive studies where attention is particularly paid to the effect of formal training programmes. These studies focus on whether taught interview methods and techniques are acquired and integrated correctly during everyday police interview practices and whether this has led to more truthful case information (Memon et al., 1994; Sternberg et al., 1997; Aldridge and Cameron, 1999; Warren et al., 1999; Sternberg et al., 2001a).
- (2) Proactive studies, these studies focus on the impact of using innovative educational techniques like role-plays and supervision, in order to optimise the learning impact of the interview training programme. Research results show for example that an intensive training together with expert feedback and follow-up supervision sessions are improving the interview behaviour of experienced officers (Fisher et al., 1989;

George and Clifford, 1992; Sternberg et al., 1999; Orbach et al., 2000; Sternberg et al., 2001b; Lamb et al., 2002; Powell et al., 2008). The latter studies particularly focus on whether techniques like feedback or role-plays influence the effectiveness of a training program. However, currently we still fail to obtain research results reflecting a sustained learning effect.

This paper therefore aims to fill the gap between the international consensus concerning how police interviews should be conducted and present police interview practices by concentrating on a new type of investigative interviewing training programme. We therefore proactively elaborated and studied the organisation of an individual coaching project for investigative interviewers. This coaching project is an ongoing development programme and fits in a broader study, where we were particularly interested in the learning impact of this new training. During the coaching project we focussed on the training of interpersonal interview competences through the use of practical learning supervised by a personal coach. We used role-plays and personal experiences of the interviewers to further develop interview skills, true self-reflection and evaluation. In addition to previous studies, the present study personally trained investigative interviewers at work. We predicted that the coaching project: will help interviewers to gain insight in their personal interview competency level, which will subsequently help them to implement learned interview methods and techniques; and will consequently increase the quality of the interview.

Although the empirical evidence of this coaching project has been analysed, the present paper will be restricted to the description of the outcome of an elaborated process where we concentrated on exploring new training opportunities of interviewers. The present paper therefore will discuss results regarding the police officers perceptions towards the individual coaching project. Although we have evolved into evidence-based policing, best practices concerning the feasibility of the coaching project is relevant given the difficulties concerning training investigative interviewers professionally. Police investigative interviewers are usually not in favour of training courses and they habitually prefer trainers and experts with a broad experience and background in interviewing as opposed to theoretically educated experts (Memon et al., 1994; Powell et al., 2005). For this reason we studied the perceptions of the participating interviewers towards the individual coaching project. In the light of police strategies and management, the practicability of the trainees towards a new project also contributes to a future efficient valorisation. An empirical based training program for example, which will not merge with the achievability of the interviewers' will be in our opinion at the end be less effective. As research results concerning the effect of this new systematic training project will be discussed in a future contribution, the present paper focuses mainly on describing the

individual coaching project and the interviewers their perceptions towards this practical training guideline, and is therefore of high value of current police education practices.

### **5.2 Rational understanding versus the actual use of reliable interview techniques**

Based on previous evaluation studies, we know that experienced police officers only use empirically-based interview methods and techniques to a minor extent during their daily interviews (Williamson, 1993; Aldridge and Cameron, 1999; Warren et al., 1999; Lamb et al., 2000; Lamb et al., 2002; Wright and Powell, 2007; Powell et al., 2008). This is understandable, as in our everyday communication we are by nature inclined to pose closed and leading questions. Stevenson and Leung (1992) researched the effect of a conceptual training through the use of a pre- and post-interview design. Based on the results they suggested that a ten-day theoretical training resulted in a positive impact with regard to “easy” interview competences such as making eye contact and adopting a relaxed and open attitude. However essential techniques such as avoiding misleading questions failed to occur. Also Warren et al. (1999) concluded that a ten-day theoretical training only resulted in an increased knowledge and a positive attitude change of the police interviewers. As was the case with the study of Stevenson and Leung (1992), their training objective was to teach officers specific interview techniques to use in interviews of child witnesses or victims.

Although officers were clearly informed regarding the human memory, effective communication, particular interview methods and techniques as well as on the importance of appropriately applying these techniques with regard to reliability, their results suggested that these initial training programmes appear to be unsatisfactory. A probable cause may be that such conceptual and temporal trainings insufficiently allow officers to replace unreliable interview techniques (such as using closed and leading questions) with correct and reliable interview skills (for example the use of open and non-suggestive questions). Consequently we hypothesize that these results suggest that temporal trainings are effective on a theoretical level, but that they fail to bring about structural behavioural changes.

### **5.3 Deliberate interview practices**

Ericsson et al. (1993) argue that the use of deliberate practice may optimise the learning process regarding the acquisition of new behavioural skills. Williams et al. (2008) maintain that the use of deliberate practice techniques improves performances of trainees through optimal learning. Deliberate practice techniques are interactive educational methods such as role-play exercises, expert feedback and supervision where the student is supervised by a coach and (1) masters a well-defined task (2) that is challenging yet

feasible, (3) receives direct feedback on his performance and results, (4) is allowed to correct his mistakes and (5) can repeat the task until it becomes a matter of practice (Williams et al., 2008, p. 74). Previously some proactive studies have empirically studied the use of this practice in relation to training investigative interviewers (Fisher et al., 1989; George and Clifford, 1992; Sternberg et al., 1999; Orbach et al., 2000; Sternberg, 2001b; Lamb et al., 2002; Powell et al., 2008). Based on a pre- and post-interview design George and Clifford (1992) studied the interview performances of seven experienced police officers who mainly interviewed victims and witnesses. During their training special attention was paid to both the conceptual aspects of the Cognitive Interview of Geiselman et al. (1985) and the use of deliberate practice techniques like showing correct versus incorrect interview methods by means of real-life interview recordings and role-playing, and including collective and individual feedback by an expert. Based on this, the researchers suggested an improvement in the post-interviews, in particular the usage of open questions.

Previously, in 1989 Fisher, Geiselman and Amador (Fisher et al., 1989) argued for a positive learning effect by using deliberate practice techniques such as role-playing and providing individual and group feedback by an expert. Their results showed that through the use of these educational techniques the police officers – when interviewing a witness or victim – used significantly more open questions, while closed and leading questions were much more absent. This study also showed that during the post-trained interviews significantly more case information was gathered by using open questions, than prior to the training. Recently Powell et al. (2008) also indicated that the receipt of expert feedback results in better interviews.

Moreover interviewing results immediately following the training showed that intra-feedback (feedback given during the role-playing) is more efficient and results in the expanded use of open questions than subsequent feedback, which is given after the role-play (post-feedback). However this feedback's impact failed to last long since after 12 weeks both groups of respondents did not show any significant difference. These research results suggest that role-plays and feedback are essential components for improving post-training interview behaviour. Consequently the use of these techniques results in better interview performances and considerably more file information compared to initial rather theoretical trainings. The question however is what more is needed to protract the impact of these training programmes? The discussed deliberate practice techniques are extremely appropriate to train and retrain interviewers. Yet the essence of these techniques is not fully elaborated in the above studies nor is much attention being paid to the acquisition of skills supervised by a coach. This is because the empirically studied training courses mostly took between two and ten days, which is fairly short since

deliberate practice techniques are characterised by their demanding nature where the police officers for example are being intensively supervised as individuals or in groups, and where both the coach and the officer engage themselves in an ongoing learning process based on trial and error. It is understood that this time-consuming nature complicates an optimal and effective integration of such techniques in the interview training programmes. Nevertheless if we want to realise a long lasting learning impact in order to optimally acquire new interview competences, we then explicitly need to take into account all five of the deliberate practice characteristics; police officers, supervised by a coach, need to repeat an acquired task as many times as it takes to make it a matter of practice.

#### **5.4 Interviewers' perceptions towards the individual coaching project: method**

The present paper studied the police interviewers' perceptions concerning an individual coaching project. In particular we explored the interviewers' views towards the valorisation of this training programme in practice. In particular we were interested in whether there is a broad basis present within the present Belgian police forces to personally train interviewers at their workplace. After experimentally setting up this training programme in practice we used an evaluation questionnaire, which consisted of multiple-choice questions and the possibility to make some comments.

##### **5.4.1 Participants**

A total of 63 (M age  $\frac{1}{4}$  42:5years, SD  $\frac{1}{4}$  7) police officers voluntarily participated this study, 51 male and 16 female experienced interviewers (M years of experience  $\frac{1}{4}$  19, SD  $\frac{1}{4}$  8) representing five police forces in three large cities in Belgium. These forces were federal or local organised police services. Six coaches were responsible for the training of the participating interviewers. The coaches were internal experts. These are police officers who are very experienced in investigative policing and who are training the investigative interviewing recruits and officers at one of the five provincial police academies. Each coach personally trained four to six colleagues for seven months, and also trained a group of four to six officers once. Consequently 32 interviewers received individual coaching and 31 interviewers only participated in the one-day pre and post assessment sessions. Preceding the training 63 per cent of the interviewers were very willing to participate, 37 per cent interviewers were willing to participate in the individual coaching project.

##### **5.4.2 Procedure**

We studied the perceptions of police interviewers towards the individual coaching project by organising a pre- and post-assessment interview in which between these two interviews half of the participating interviewers were intensively being coached for seven months

at work by their personal coach. We ended the post coaching assessment procedure with an evaluation questionnaire, which every participating officer completed. Results of this questionnaire are analysed and will be discussed below. First the individual coaching procedure will be discussed.

#### 5.4.2.1 *The individual coaching project*

The present individual training of interview competences attempts to assist interviewers to become aware of adequate and appropriate personal interview skills and to make maximal use of these during their actual interview practices. In addition this also implies experiencing less efficient interview competences. This was done by means of personal coaching at work through monthly follow-up sessions between the coach and the interviewer supplemented with a sustained focus on ongoing feedback and supervision. The present individual coaching project was therefore structured according to two subsequent training phases: an assessment and a development phase. Primarily the interviewer's basic interview behaviour was defined during the assessment phase with the aid of the Police Interview Competency Inventory. The Police Interview Competency Inventory (PICI) is a tool that consists of 40 different interview competences and is able to measure interpersonal interview performances such as being empathic, being patient, being authoritative, being complaisant, having perseverance, being offensive et cetera. (For more detailed information regarding this police assessment tool refer to De Fruyt et al., 2006; Smets, 2009.) The 360-degree feedback method was used to define the personal interview competences with a group of interviewers (four to six police officers) both interviewing a suspect as well as observing the interviews of their colleagues.

These interviews consisted of simulated role-play exercises where the role of the suspect was played by a professional actor and the scenarios consisted of real life interview cases. Some of the personal experiences of the coaches were cast in written scenarios. The content of these real-life scenarios was adapted to the present research purposes and presented to the actors.

Accordingly the scenarios contained guidelines like how "the suspect" needed to behave in order to elicit PICI competences of the interviewers. The actors were instructed to only make a confession when this was a logical consequence of the interviewer's performances. We deliberately used professional actors, as Powell et al. (2008) argued the beneficial use of trained actors as opposed to fellow participants. We attempted to run the role-plays as closely as possible with real life practices. Experiential learning exercises such as role-plays are in general of high heuristic value as it allows participants to examine and optimise particular job-related skills (Lexton et al., 2005; Van Hasselt et al., 2008). Following every simulated interview, PICI scores, expert and peer feedback



were collected and used as input for the following actual coaching. During the 360-degree group assessment session the feedback was structured by the coach and mainly consisted of discussing personal interview competences, yet it was also possible to give feedback on used interview techniques.

Because the interviewers assessed themselves and their peers, every interviewer received both expert feedback and peer feedback. It is advisable to generate a variety of feedback as received feedback for example may not match the interviewer's self-assessment. This contrary assessment will be easier to accept when both the peers and the coach do agree on it. The coaches were therefore instructed to provide their feedback after the peers. Consequently the experts could professionally counteract inaccurate and unpleasantly formulated peer feedback if necessary (Pauwels, 2009). Though based on our observations this was not frequently needed when the peers interacted very seriously and gave useful feedback. The recordings of these role-playing exercises and accompanied feedback afterwards, made it possible to integrate this as valuable study material within the following development stage.

Secondly, during the development phase we subsequently focused on the actual performance coaching of the interviewers. During a first individual meeting at work between the coach and the interviewer, a shortlist of points of interest based on the assessment results were drawn up. To this end the coach and the investigative interviewer specified a number of PICI interview competences, which the interviewer wanted to pay attention to in the future. This means that the first coaching session's objective was mainly to define a list of possible issues of attention consisting of both positive and less appropriate interview competences. Afterwards, emphasis was put on making these interview competences concrete so they could be further optimised. The inputs used by the interviewer for drawing up a personal shortlist were:

- . PICI self-assessment;
- . PICI peer-assessments;
- . verbal feedback of peers;
- . verbal expert feedback;
- . recorded simulated role-play; and
- . personal experiences.

Subsequently follow-up coaching sessions were organised and the actual coaching project started. During the second individual session, the investigative interviewer selected two interview competences to work with. It is advisable that the interviewer himself choose the issues of attention so they can be in line with the individual's natural preferences. Imposing issues for attention will only provoke resistance and are not helpful for the

development process. Training behaviour that is not in line with the individual's natural will possibly result in less durable behavioural changes (Competentiedenken, 2008). When coaching and further developing these competences, the interviewer's everyday interview behaviour and real-life experiences took a central part of the coaching. The coach used specialised feedback and conversation techniques when discussing these experiences in order to generate a process of self-reflection and evaluation for the interviewer. Professional and informative feedback is necessary when optimal progression is pursued with regard to behavioural change and development (Ericsson et al., 1993). The coaches therefore provide the investigative interviewer with three different types of feedback (Williams et al., 2008):

- (1) During the initial 360 degree assessment group session, the coach gave relevant feedback on the actual interviewer's role-play interview performances at the time. This is feedback following the real-life interview performances of the interviewer by means of role-playing with an actor.
- (2) During the development phase, before drawing up a shortlist, the recorded simulated assessment interview was reviewed by the coach and the interviewer, where both gave feedback on the interviewer his performances. The recorded interview can be paused and rewound whenever more explanation is needed. This is comprehensive feedback with the aid of footage on the simulated interview.
- (3) During the actual performance coaching sessions the coach provided feedback based on the interviewer's real life experiences and perceptions like oral experiences, diary notes and/or a written statements. Furthermore the coach made use of role-playings where he played the role of the suspect. In this way the coach and the interviewer created the opportunity to manifest and replay bottleneck issues that the interviewer was confronted with in a real interview. Here a role-play is also a useful and efficient educational tool because the coach can anticipate the police officer's used skills during the play, and can pause and subsequently resume the role-play when concrete feedback is necessary. Subsequently specific competences can be exercised and corrected on the spot. Hence this will enable the interviewer to repeat particular interview behaviour until the actions become a matter of practice. In this way the coach will not be exclusively dependent on the interviewer's perceptions. By means of realistic fragments he will have much more opportunities to concretise the selected issues of attention. This is feedback based on the interviewers' reflections and perceptions by means of role-playing by the coach.

After seven months a post-coaching assessment was organised in order to study the potential progression and the development of the coached interviewing skills. The interviewers participated again in a 360 degree group session where every interviewer interviewed a suspect in a simulated investigative interview. As opposed to the pre-

coaching assessment, the role of the suspect was played this time by a trained actor who particularly paid attention to the two personally coached competences. With regard to these competences the actor already gave feedback during the role-playing by expressing (in her role) what the interviewer's communication has highlighted. Next, peer and expert feedback and PICI scores were gathered again. This coaching design made it possible to compare and analyse the PICI scores and feedback of the pre- and post-assessment interview. Summarising, it can be stated that the individual coaching of experienced police interviewers can consist of the sequence of the following components where the latter does not necessarily mean the coaching's final stage. If wanted, the post coaching assessment can be the start of a new coaching project or development phase. This repeated succession specifies the ongoing nature of the individual coaching (Figure 1).

#### 5.4.2.2 Internal versus external experts

In the current coaching project we deliberately choose to let internal experts (the coaches) and academics work together. The internal project

Figure 1. The individual coaching



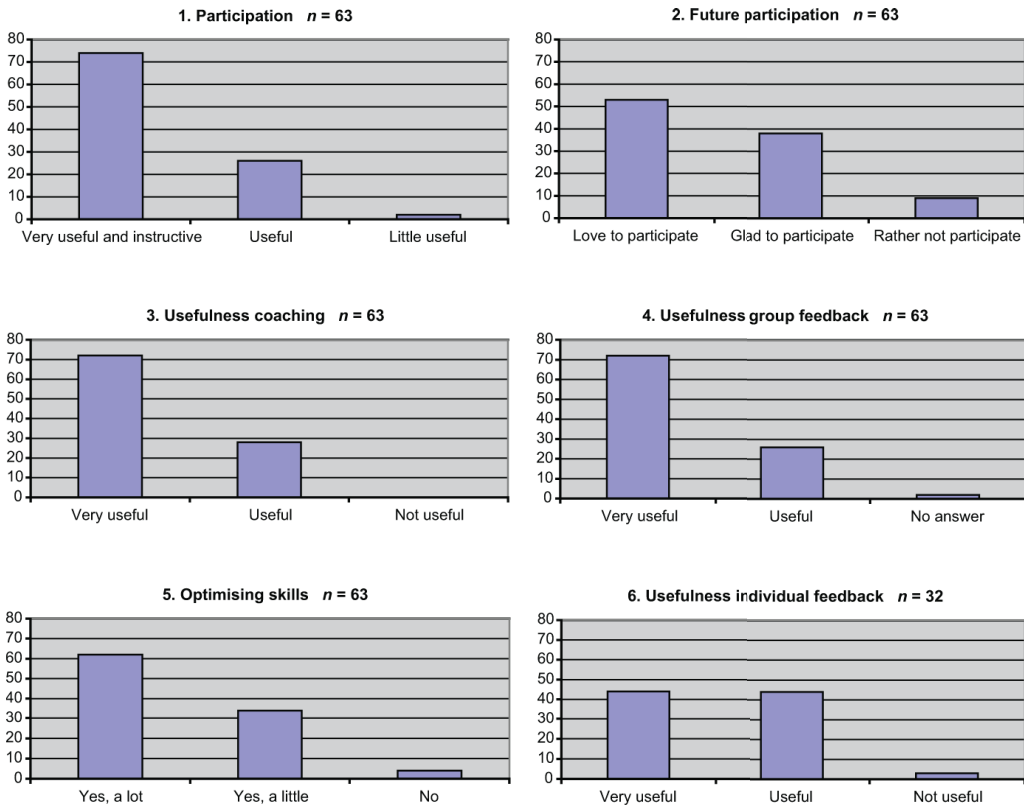
experts were highly experienced police officers who in their turn were coached by external specialists with a behavioural sciences education and a training background. The benefit of this collaboration is that the internal expert and the coached interviewer had in common a number of aspects such as a similar background, a common frame of reference and a similar way of communicating. Though, as opposed to the external experts, the coaches were not professionally trained in providing individuals with supervision. In preparation for this project the coaches therefore received training on organising role-playings and using effective communication when giving feedback. After all it is important that the feedback is formulated clearly and comprehensible so the investigative interviewer would not have any questions about his performances. In a study done by Warren et al. (1999) investigative interviewers found, for example, that the trainers' feedback was insufficiently specific in order to adequately exercise new skills.

Additionally the coaches were intensively supervised during the coaching project by the external experts. Monthly follow-up supervision sessions were organised, and dealt with the experiences and bottleneck issues of the coaches. Here, the real-life coaching situations were stressed by means of role-playings in which the coaches at their turn received professional ongoing feedback. Consequently the internal experts were also coached and provided with feedback and a variety of methodologies to be used.

### 5.5 Results

When asked to rate how the police officers experienced their coaching participation, 72 per cent of the interviewers responded with very worthwhile and instructive, 26 per cent of the interviewers thought the training project was worthwhile and 2 per cent of the participating officers experienced the individual coaching little worthwhile. No interviewers evaluated the coaching as not worthwhile (Figure 2 – bar chart 1). A total of 14 officers took the effort to further comment their answer and strengthen their positive evaluation. Several of these comments are quoted below:

*I have learned a lot during this project and I am happy I participated. This was a unique experience and something to recommend to every police interviewer. Receiving personal feedback from both*



*the peers and the coach is very helpful: it is useful to hear how well you are doing something and how you come across as an interviewer. The police organisation pays to little attention to these kinds of interesting projects, such initiatives should be organised much more. It is rather difficult to initially define two points of special interest but when found, it is really meaningful to take these into account while you are interviewing. By the recorded role-plays it is possible to take a good look at yourself and to thoroughly examine and evaluate your interview behaviour and steer clear of bad habits if necessary. Especially a renewed awareness will stick in my mind forever because of the repeating moments of self-analysing and questioning during the interviews and role-plays.*

When asked to rate if the officers would participate to a possible new coaching project in the future, 53 per cent of the police officers replied that they would love to participate in the future, 38 per cent would be glad to participate and only five officers (9 per cent) would rather not participating a coaching project in the future. Though there were no officers who did not want to participate at all in the future (Figure 2 – bar chart 2). This study also asked whether the police officers found this training was useful. 72 per cent police officers found coaching of interview competences very useful, 28 per cent found it useful and there were no officers that experienced this coaching unuseful (Figure 2 – bar chart 3).

When the interviewers were asked how they experienced the peer and expert feedback they received during the assessment group procedure, the majority of the participants (72 per cent) experienced this feedback as very useful and 26 per cent found it useful. One person (2 per cent) did not answer this question. Again there were no interviewers that perceived the group feedback not useful (Figure 2 – bar chart 4). Moreover the officers were very enthusiastic towards the 360-degree group assessment where we deliberately focused on practical learning experiences. A participating officer commented that as follows:

*By using a real interview situation you can ask particular questions concerning the interview. I think this is essential, if you want to be a better interviewer.*

Other interviewers expressed their experience about the group feedback as follows:

*Receiving the feedback of people who are specifically trained (like the coach, the psychologist and the training-actor) provides added value. Collaboration on such a project can put you in a vulnerable position, but at no time I have had the feeling that comments and criticisms were meant to be offensive. There was a very good group composition and great respect from all those involved.*

The present study also asked the participating officers if they thought the coaching thoroughly optimised and further developed their interview skills. Of the officers 62 per cent agreed that they optimised their interview competences a lot, 34 per cent thought the optimised their competences a little and 4 per cent (two of the 63 participating interviewers) did not agree with their colleagues and thought they did not optimise their interview skills (Figure 2 – bar chart 5). Some interviewers clarified their answer as follows:

*I feel more certain after the project, recent interview results reflect this. The coaching has made me aware of my weaker areas as a consequence I spend more attention to these during my interviews.  
I feel that I've adjusted my interview style. The tips I learned will definitely help me in future.*

The 32 officers who were individually trained were asked how they perceived the individual coaching sessions. Of these interviewers 44 per cent thought the face-to-face coaching sessions between the coach and themselves were very useful, 44 per cent thought these sessions were useful and 1 person (3 per cent) thought the individual sessions were not useful. Three interviewers (9 per cent) did not complete this question (Figure 2 – bar chart 6). The other 31 participating interviewers also did not answer this question as they only joined the pre and post assessment group assessment. Several interviewers accompanied their answers with the comments below:

*These sessions gave me an insight into my own ability. During the sessions I definitely was at the right place to present and discuss the questions I had. Even as an experienced interviewer you can always learn new things and try to apply these in practice. Through the sessions my attention was repeatedly drawn to my personal potential where weaknesses were corrected and subordinated. It is useful to reflect on personal points of special interest but it is less obvious how to apply to every interview.  
Just discussing my personal experiences of an interview I conducted in the past has been helpful. Through these sessions my strong competences were confirmed which also give me an idea of my inferior abilities.*

## 5.6 Discussion

An effective interviewing training programme needs to ensure interviewers to use the acquired interview techniques even when the training ended. This is essential because correct and adequate interviewing of suspects is needed in order to obtain truthful case information. Although realising behavioural changes by means of a temporal interview training is rather difficult to achieve (Lamb et al., 2000), preceding studies have shown that an intensive training with additional support for expert feedback and supervision sessions temporarily improve the police interview practices (Lamb et al.,

2002). Nevertheless these studies fail to realise a protracted learning impact. This is in our opinion because current training programmes do not make interviewers aware of their interpersonal interview behaviour. In addition these trainings do not educate the police interviewers to distinguish at time between the acquired interview skills and their personal interview competences. Though Powell et al. (2005) stressed the necessity of studies that define how to effectively organise ongoing feedback and supervision sessions. The previous evaluation studies have paid little attention to the interviewer's interpersonal functioning, the content and goal of the feedback, the profile of the expert, and the importance of a protracted learning impact.

The present paper therefore elaborately discussed the individual coaching project. This fits in with a broader study in which we are interested in studying the learning impact of an ongoing training procedure that focuses on training interpersonal interview competences. The individual coaching project differs from other empirically studied training programmes by the explicit focus on training interpersonal interview behaviour instead of teaching a well-defined protocol or interview techniques. Summarily the individual coaching project consequently distinguishes from other interview trainings by:

- . coaching personal interview competences based on real-life experiences of the interviewer through one on one sessions with a personal coach at work;
- . collecting peer feedback; and
- . the ongoing nature of the expert feedback.

First, the interviewer's interpersonal potential was taken into account. According to the coaching project every interviewer had a customised training aimed at increasing their personal interviews skills. The real-life interview experiences of the interviewer served as a frame of reference on which the individual coaching was shaped. In this way less competent interviewers were coached to become good interviewers while good interviewers were guided to be more successful. We believe that getting an insight into personal functioning is far more instructive and presumably therefore more efficient than the mere acquiring of well-defined interview methods and techniques. Training an impulsive dominant interviewer to become a calm empathic listener will for example turn out to be a difficult process (Smets, 2009).

As opposed to this, giving the interviewer the opportunity to pay attention to his own personal interview competences we hypothetically assume it is possible – supervised by a coach and by means of self-reflection – to optimise and improve specific competences that are typical for a certain individual. By concentrating on individual interview competences and personal growth opportunities, we are convinced that an interviewer could become aware of his dominant interview behaviour. Then the coach could supervise

the interviewer in learning to anticipate and adapt to this dominant behaviour in specific situations. After all, acquiring a behaviour that does not fit with the interviewer's personality will result in a less efficient result. Although we are aware that the above description is a rather ideal situation, we think that custom made training would improve the daily police interviews and the quality of policing in general.

Additionally we believe that a successfully accomplished coaching project depends on the profile of the coach. We believe that the role of the personal coach can be best performed by internal police experts who have built experience through their years of police practice. We note that the participating coaches already had gained a certain status amongst their peers and that their authority as a coach was not being questioned. Notwithstanding their expertise, the coaches in their turn were coached by external experts having a social science background. This successful collaboration between internal and external experts ensured the organisation of an adequate coaching progress. When giving feedback this hands-on expert, as opposed to theoretically trained experts could fall back on personal experience. Consequently, the interviewers and the coach shared a similar level of communication, which had three major benefits. First, the coach had a high level of empathy; based on own experiences he immediately understood what the officer was talking about. Second, it was easier for the interviewer to identify himself with the coach and to really comprehend what the coach meant to say. Third, because of his expertise it was easier for the internal coach to indicate that he knew what he was talking about, causing the interviewer to more easily accept his feedback. Besides these benefits it is also convenient for the coach that the coaching sessions are organised at the police station and that when needed the investigative interviewers can pay an unannounced visit to the coach for advice prior to, for example, a complicated interview.

Second, previous studies showed that follow-up sessions, expert feedback and role-playing exercises organised on a regular basis are crucial when training adequate interview behaviour (Fisher et al., 1989; George and Clifford, 1992; Sternberg et al., 1999; Orbach et al., 2000; Sternberg et al., 2001b; Lamb et al., 2002; Powell et al., 2008). After all, it takes time to introduce behavioural changes such as acquiring appropriate interview skills. We therefore predicted that an ongoing process is essential in order to optimise the everyday interview practices. Consequently the present coaching project is quite labour-intensive. However temporal and conceptual trainings are needed to teach interviewers the theoretical aspects of interviewing in an adequate and reliable way. Yet we assume that these short-lived trainings can be effective only when they are considered as the start of an ongoing development process. Hence it seems worthwhile to see the individual coaching project as a logical follow-up programme and to integrate it in the everyday police practice following, for example, a conceptual training. Although we might ask



ourselves whether such a reorganisation is financially viable and realistic? Furthermore the question may arise whether the police are ready for such a mentality change? After all, self-reflection is an important prerequisite in order to realise a coaching process. This requires quite some effort from the coach and the interviewer. Consequently this process can only be started when open and honest communication on the personal functioning can be sufficiently guaranteed.

Although experts and academics are convinced that evidence-based interviewing is the key to efficient and reliable policing, the police officers entrusted with the actual interview need to recognise the necessity of certain protocols or training programmes. In reality however police interviewers are not the easiest people to train, especially when they have already gained experience throughout their policing years (Chan, 2008). Moreover we noticed when studying the coaching project that the empirical background of the training is not the only important component we need to take seriously into account. Far more important, in our opinion, is how the police officers respond to the training. How well the officers accept the training and whether the training adequately appeals to actual police practices. The present study therefore analysed the feasibility and practicability of the individual coaching project. We therefore evaluated participating police officers' perceptions towards the project. When asked to evaluate their coaching involvement, overall the interviewers were very enthusiastic towards their project participation. Almost all interviewers thought the coaching project was very worthwhile and instructive and they thought they had developed and optimised their interview skills. In general, the interviewers' experiences of both the one-day assessment group coaching and the ongoing individual coaching were found to be very useful. In addition they generally would love to participate in a future coaching project.

Although we are aware that the present paper solely reports the interpersonal perceptions of the interviewers towards the coaching project and that these results do not support the empirical impact of this coaching procedure, we consider the present evaluation results very valuable. Built upon previous studies, we are convinced that the willingness of the interviewers seriously contributes to the effectiveness of a training programme. The present results show that when monthly coaching of interviewers takes place at work and based on real life experiences, the officers sufficiently support this training. We believe this is a major first step towards efficiently training interviewers and to increasing the quality of daily police interviews.

A limitation of this individual coaching design is the use of role-playing interviews. No matter how good a role-play is set up, it will remain an approximation of the reality. Real-life interviews are therefore more worthwhile and informative. Alternatively real-

life videotaped interviews of suspects could be used. Recordings of real-life interviews could, for example, be discussed during an individual coaching session. In this way the coach is able to give feedback on actual interview skills and competences instead of being dependent on the interviewer's experiences. Being merely dependent on the police officer's perceptions could be disturbing and could obstruct the profundity of the coaching, since individuals tend to describe situations from a self-serving perspective. This perspective does not always match the perceptions of others, in which case we speak of self-serving bias (De Fruyt et al., 2006). Actual recordings would however offer an additional coaching value. Though, contrary to other countries, in Belgium little videotaped interviews of suspects are held. This makes Belgian police interview practices less transparent a posteriori. This is disappointing not only because of the training opportunities discussed, but far more importantly this is unfortunate from legal point of view.

Subsequently it would be interesting to study the nature of acquired competences in relation to a particular interview situation (interviewing of suspect, witnesses and victims). When, for example, a troublesome suspect or a sensitive victim needs to be interviewed, it would be interesting to focus on certain personal interview competences of an officer when selecting a person that fits in an optimal way to conduct that interview. Yet future empirical studies are needed to give clear statements on the impact of interviewing suspects, victims or witnesses by an interviewer who possesses a number of well-defined interview competences. Moreover longitudinal and cross-sectional studies are needed in order to study the effectiveness of this ongoing training programme.

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# Chapter 6.

Training police in investigative interviewing competences:

## The effects of an ongoing individual coaching procedure versus one-day peer group training

This chapter is paper 3 that is resubmitted after a review procedure to the Journal of Experimental Criminology as: Smets, L. & Elffers, H., Training police investigative interviewing competences: The effects of an ongoing individual coaching procedure versus one-day peer group training.

## Abstract

As today's daily police interviewing practices can still be defined as rather poor, we can assume that this is caused by unsatisfactory interview training programmes. The content of this study therefore focuses on the development of two new types of training programmes: *individual coaching* versus *one-day peer group coaching*. In particular, this study analysed the additional value of the individual coaching compared to the peer group coaching. A pre and post coaching design with different types of evaluators was used as we collected self, peer, coach and suspect ratings before and after the training. The interviewing skills of 63 officers were assessed and defined pre and post the individual coaching with the help of the peer group training, consisting of: (i) a role-played interview; (ii) a Police Interviewing Competency Inventory; and (iii) a 360 degree feedback procedure. Following this, 32 of the officers received custom-made individual coaching for seven months. The results show that: (1) both methods led to higher scores in PICI post coaching assessments; (2) the individual training led to higher scores in PICI post coaching assessments than the peer group training; and (3) the individual training of single interview competences led to the amelioration of interviewing performances in general, though these results were non significant. The observed standardised effect sizes and the power of the tests used shows that the non significance of the results is, however, due to the small sample size rather than to the absence of improvement. The present results are therefore found to be promising, showing that both training procedures can be of high value to interview training practices.

Keywords: interviewing competences, peer feedback, role plays, supervision, training

## 6.1 Introduction

While rather poor interviewing behaviour can still be observed during daily police interviewing practices (Hershkowitz, 1999; Warren et al., 1999; Sternberg et al., 2001; Bull and Milne, 2004; Powell et al., 2005; Westcott et al., 2006; Powell and Wright, 2008; Dando et al., 2009)<sup>1</sup>, researchers in the field of investigative interviewing have been increasingly concerned about the efficiency of interview training programmes since the 1990s. Currently, investigative interviewing training programmes are mainly focused on how interviewing protocols can be taught successfully. These training courses generally consist of teaching empirically based reliable interviewing techniques (e.g. open, non-leading questions, building rapport, using an open empathic attitude) merged into best-

<sup>1</sup> Poor interview behaviour can be defined by, for example, the use of closed and leading questions or being suggestive rather than reflecting an information-gathering interviewing attitude (Williamson, 1993; Gudjonsson, 2003; Milne and Bull, 2006). Based on multidisciplinary investigative interviewing research it is known that these techniques, which are often being driven by the wish to obtain a confession, are more likely to result in unreliable and inaccurate interview information than the usage of open questions and the aim to elicit a free recall, as open questions and eliciting a free recall encourages the interviewee to use their own words when recalling on memory (Fisher and Geiselman, 1992; Rassin and Candell, 2010).



practice interviewing protocols representing several chronological interviewing phases. For example, the Cognitive Interview is used to enhance the recollection of information when interviewing witnesses and victims (Fisher et al., 1989), the PEACE model, where every letter stands for a particular interviewing phase, is used in the UK (Milne and Bull, 1999; Dando, 2010), and the 'interviewing action plan' is organised and used by the Belgian police.

Overall, present courses are strongly theoretically oriented and usually very short, ranging from three to ten days, with little attention given to personal characteristics and few opportunities to practise newly acquired skills, to correct mistakes, or to ensure the correct implementation of newly acquired interviewing techniques into daily interviewing practices. Warren et al. (1999) therefore stated that today's interview training programmes are mostly efficient on a theoretical level, although they do not successfully achieve permanent behavioural changes. Consequently, we can observe a discrepancy between the conceptual understanding of interviewing techniques and methods, and their practical application in the field of policing (Warren et al., 1999). This paper therefore constitutes an attempt to fill the gap between multidisciplinary investigative interviewing knowledge about how to conduct an interview and actual police interviewing performances, by: (1) developing two new interview training courses to enhance interpersonal interviewing skills of police interviewers at work; and (2) comparing the learning impact of these two newly developed training methods in the field, using a randomised research design and a new measurement tool: the Police Interview Competency Inventory (PICCI), which qualitatively measures interpersonal interview competences.

#### 6.1.1 Supervision and feedback

Several researchers have emphasised the importance of regularly updating and mastering interviewing skills through the use of supervision and feedback (Memon et al., 1994; Warren et al., 1999; Aldridge and Cameron, 1999; Orbach et al., 2000; Sternberg et al., 2001; Lamb et al., 2000; Lamb et al., 2002; Powell et al., 2005; Williams et al., 2008). In addition, it appears that apart from the content of the training, the use of practical learning techniques like role play and feedback sessions also has an impact on the trainee's interviewing ability (Powell et al., 2008). Although some studies have shown that regular follow-ups with expert feedback increase the amount of open, non-suggestive questions and lead to more relevant case information (Fisher et al., 1989; George and Clifford, 1992; Sternberg et al., 1999; Orbach et al., 2000; Sternberg et al., 2001; Lamb et al., 2002; Powell et al., 2008), none of these studies have been able to install long-lasting behavioural changes. We hypothesise that this can be attributed to the lack of attention to interpersonal capabilities.

Although the goal of an interview is to gather information, the result of the interview is mainly determined by the interaction between the interviewer and the suspect. This interaction is unpredictable and differs in each situation, depending on the people (both the interviewer and the suspect). Interviewers need to rely on themselves and their existing interviewing competences to ensure the collection of relevant and accurate information, as there is often nothing else that can aid them with their goal. Receiving feedback on interpersonal interviewing competences and performances is therefore presumably of high value (Smets and Pauwels, 2010).

### 6.1.2 Practising interviewing skills

As stated by Ericsson et al. (2007), the amount and the quality of practice that people receive are key factors in their achieved levels of expertise. Also, Milne and Bull (2003) stated that the only way to improve daily police interviewing behaviour is to organise appropriate training, both in terms of quality and quantity. Despite their efficiency, learning techniques such as role play and feedback sessions, where newly acquired interviewing skills can be rehearsed appropriately, have not previously been integrated into the interviewers' daily police practices. Neither have these training techniques been applied in the past to develop individuals' interviewing competences. Role plays and accompanied feedback are generally an addendum on specialised interview training courses, where these are used to evaluate certain interviewing techniques like the use of open questions, rather than as opportunities to practise behavioural skills. Moreover, we are not aware of any studies that have specifically examined the different effects of professional interviewing behaviour training from person to person at work. Seeing that experiential learning in the workplace can best be monitored and structured into a learning model that offers interviewers the possibility to build up experience and expertise in a formal way (Ericsson et al., 2007), two new interview training procedures focused on the educative value of role plays and feedback have been constructed, based on the principles of deliberate practice of Ericsson et al. (1993). These new procedures are: *ongoing individual coaching* versus *one-day peer group coaching*. Refer to Smets and Pauwels (2010) for a detailed description and additional background of the elaborate development of the two training procedures principle.

### 6.1.3 Interpersonal interview competences

The individual coaching procedure differs from other interview-related training by its explicit focus on the development of interpersonal interview competences that are characteristic of the interviewer's job performance, rather than teaching general well-known interview protocols. Therefore, this training course differs from others because it includes: (i) frequent supervision sessions between the interviewer and an internal

expert in order to further develop interpersonal interview skills; (ii) ongoing expert feedback based on the interviewer's perceptions of their daily interview performances; and (iii) 360-degree feedback from peers based on individual role-play performances. In contrast to feedback from an external expert, feedback from internal experts and peers comprises feedback from highly to less highly experienced interviewers based on past police performances. In addition, internal expert feedback has the advantage that both the expert and the interviewer communicate within the same frame of reference, which often makes it easier to accept unexpected feedback. As we hypothesised that a potential learning impact depends on the amount and quality of supervision, exercise and feedback (Ericsson et al., 1993; Ericsson et al., 2007; Milne and Bull, 2003), we manipulated the amount, frequency and content of the coaching interventions by developing a second, one-day peer group coaching procedure. This coaching procedure consisted of a single group feedback session where both an internal expert and peers provided feedback based on the interviewers' individual performances while conducting a role-play interview. These two newly designed training conditions have been evaluated experimentally.

#### 6.1.3.1 *The individual coaching group*

The first training course, the individual coaching, consisted of an initial peer group meeting to assess and comment on the interviewers' competences accompanied by a ongoing personal coaching procedure.

Since little attention is paid in current interview training programmes to the interviewers' personal capabilities, this coaching condition focused on further developing interpersonal interview competences. This procedure therefore did not consist of a standardised programme or a certain protocol, as was the basis of previous studies (Fisher et al., 1989; George and Clifford, 1992; Sternberg et al., 1999; Orbach et al., 2000; Sternberg et al., 2001; Lamb et al., Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin & Mitchell, 2002; Myklebust and Bjørklund, 2006; Powell et al., 2008). This method of training consisted of customised, personalised, individual coaching sessions with a focus on one or two interview competences that were relevant to the interviewer and that could benefit from further training. These coaching sessions can be seen as supervisory meetings between the internal coach and the interviewer, where the coach gives feedback to the interviewer regarding his interviewing behaviour, in order to install a process of self-reflection that helps to further develop the two pre-selected interviewing competences. Due to the fact that every interviewer has his or her own strengths and weaknesses, the coached competences involved in the training were not necessarily the same for every interviewer.

This new way of training police officers is based on the idea that first, intrinsic interview capabilities and potential interview behaviour need to be assessed, and then they need

to be further developed in order to establish a long-lasting learning effect. Hence, interviewing competences need to be measured in order to improve. After assessing the interviewers' strengths and weaknesses using a one-day peer group feedback session, the interviewers selected two relevant competences that would be coached. It is advisable that in the process of identification, the interviewer himself picks the issues needing attention so they can be in line with the individual's natural preferences and capacities. Imposing interview competences would only provoke resistance and would not help the development process. Training behaviour that is not in line with the individual's natural preference would result in the coaching process being disturbed and would lead to less durable behavioural changes (Competentiedenken, 2008).

The interview skills were developed over a period of seven months. Training interviewers in a one-to-one setting was preferable, as both the coach and the interviewer could fully focus on improving the professional interview performances of the interviewer. Approximately every four to six weeks, individual coaching sessions were organised in the workplace. The content of the coaching sessions consisted of discussing the interviewer's daily interviewing performances in relation to the competences that the interviewer had chosen to work on. Interviewers were asked to actively reflect on the interviews they conducted during their real-life police work by briefing the coach about their perceived strengths and weaknesses. The training could therefore be directly related to problems they encountered in their working lives.

#### 6.1.3.2 *The one-day peer group*

The second training condition, the one-day peer group coaching, consisted of a single peer group meeting to assess and comment on the interviewers' skills.

As previously discussed by other authors, the learner-centred method is preferable when training police officers, particularly when new behavioural skills such as reliable interviewing methods, need to be learned (Conti, 1989; Birzer, 2003; McCoy, 2006). This is assumed to be the case, as this method closely follows the practical learning approach. Consequently, this learner-centred method assumes that it is more effective to immediately and actively approach adult students using specific role-play scenarios that are related to real work situations, through which they can practise new skills. In addition, this method assumes that the trainer and the student need to proactively reach a mutual agreement. Conversely, the teacher-centred approach is defined by the idea that officers need to follow a specific training programme in a rather passive way. Moreover, the effect of such an education depends mainly on the teacher's activities during the course rather than those of the participating interviewers themselves (Conti, 1989; Birzer, 2003; McCoy, 2006). The latter teaching approach is currently commonly

used for training investigative interviewers. This method has led to a situation where interviewers cannot distinguish between their actual interviewing performances and the effective new interviewing skills that they are supposed to use. One reason for this is that they did not have sufficient opportunities to actually practise these newly acquired interviewing skills. This study therefore explicitly focused on the use of experiential learning techniques such as group sessions with role-playing exercises and the use of feedback from peers and experts, throughout which the interviewer was expected to be self-directed and self-motivated. The peer coaching session therefore mainly consisted of bringing interviewers together in order to actively encourage them to learn from one another.

During the single peer feedback coaching session, the interviewers' basic interviewing behaviour was assessed and commented on using: (i) a simulated (role-play) interview; (ii) the PICI; and (iii) the 360 degree feedback method. The 360 degree feedback method involved organising group sessions with four to six interviewers in which every interviewer: (i) interviewed a suspect (played by an actor) for 40 minutes; and (ii) observed the interviewing performances of his colleagues. These group assessment sessions were supervised by an internal coach. In accordance with the learner-centred method, the interviewers were asked to provide feedback on their own interviewing performances and those of their peers, though comments were also provided about the methods and interviewing techniques used.

#### 6.1.3.3 Role plays with trained actors

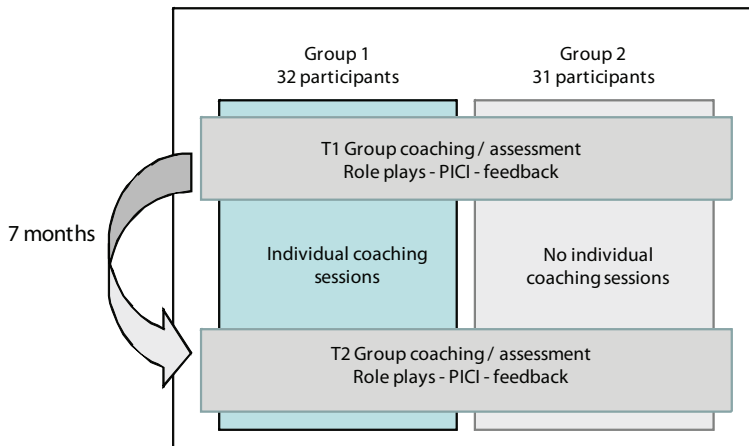
The simulated interviews consisted of role plays with professional actors, as Powell et al. (2008) argued the beneficial use of trained actors as opposed to fellow participants. Role plays with trained actors are generally of high heuristic value, as they allow participants to examine and optimise their interviewing competences in a safe environment, where mistakes made during the training process have no consequences, as they would during a real interview (Van Hasselt et al., 2008; Powell et al., 2010; Smets and Pauwels, 2010). Role plays make individual interviewing competences visible and concrete, which is mandatory before training can be provided. The role plays were based on the participating coaches' own experiences of interviewing suspects from past cases, which were set out as written scenarios. The content of these real-life scenarios was subsequently adapted to the purposes of this research and presented to the actors. The scenarios contained guidelines such as how the 'suspects' needed to behave in order to elicit the competences defined in the PICI. The actors were instructed to only make a confession when this was a logical consequence of the interviewer's performance. In total, 12 different scenarios were composed. An overview of these scenarios is presented in Appendix A.

#### 6.1.4 The present study

The present study is the first of its kind to use a randomised approach to study the effects of both of these newly designed individual and group coaching procedures for training police interviewers in their workplace with the help of role-played simulated interviews. Based on an experimental pre and post coaching design, we studied the effects of both coaching procedures. A total of 63 voluntary experienced Belgian interviewers were randomly assigned to these two coaching programmes: 32 interviewers completed the individual coaching procedure, which consisted of a one-day group session with peer feedback and monthly one-on-one coaching sessions with internal expert feedback for seven months; the other 31 interviewers participated in a one-day group coaching session with peer feedback only and did not have monthly individual feedback sessions. The additional value of the individual performance coaching in comparison with the one-day peer coaching was evaluated by using the PICI.

Several researchers have emphasised the necessity of a tool that objectively assesses interviewing performances (Stevenson and Leung, 1992; Warren et al., 1999; Powell et al., 2005). De Fruyt et al. (2006) and Smets (2009) demonstrated that police interviewers require five distinct investigative interviewing competences, which are mandatory in order to conduct a successful interview outcome. These competences are: (i) being careful-tenacious; (ii) behaving in a controlled and non-reactive way; (iii) not being too dominant or insistent during the interview; (iv) being communicative; and (v) behaving benevolently. The PICI is an assessment tool that measures these skills and is used in this study to define interpersonal interviewing behaviour. By collecting PICI self-assessments in addition to assessments of the interviewers, their peers, the coach and the suspect after pre and post coaching simulated interviews, we were able to study the effects of the two training conditions. Before the training began, we assessed interviewers' personal interviewing competency in order to first define and then further develop these competences (this was done at Time 1 (T<sub>1</sub>)). We then reassessed the interviewers' personal interviewing competences once the coaching interventions had been completed, to study the potential training evolution (this was done at Time 2 (T<sub>2</sub>)) (see Figure 1). Collecting assessments by the actors who played the role of the suspect in a simulated interview is innovative, since the suspect's evaluations are valuable though they have rarely been studied in the past. This is because the participation of real suspects is complex, and it would be difficult to gain permission to receive feedback of suspect individuals who were actually being interviewed by the police. In addition, when interviewed by the police, suspects frequently think it is in their interest to lie, and therefore (unlike actors) the empirical value of real-life suspects' evaluations is questionable.

Figure 1: Research design



### 6.1.5 Research hypotheses

Three main hypotheses made in this study were: (1) The individual coaching procedure would help interviewers gain insights into their personal interviewing competency level, which would subsequently help them to correctly implement the interviewing methods and techniques they had learned, and would therefore further develop and increase the quality of their police interviewing skills measured by the PICI; (2) The one day peer feedback coaching procedure would have little impact on the development of interviewing competences, in contrast to the individual coaching group measured by the PICI; and (3) The personal coaching condition would have a considerable effect, although due to the complex and irregular nature of police interviews, we expected this effect to be predisposed by unpredictable factors that influence the interview outcomes and consequently generate a certain amount of error. Even though we deliberately chose to work with a relatively small number of participants so that the focus on the content of the training courses could prevail, we still expected the results to be influenced by the small research sample that consisted of 63 experienced police interviewers.

From earlier research (De Fruyt et al., 2006; Smets, 2009) we can estimate the standard deviation of the total PICI score to be in the order of magnitude of .33, hence  $\sigma_2 \approx .1$ . Assuming that person variance and error variance are of approximately equal size, the error variance will then be  $\approx .05$ , hence the error standard deviation  $\sigma(\epsilon) \approx .22$ . The standard deviation of the difference between difference scores  $d$  for 32 participants of the individual coaching and 31 of the group coaching conditions before and after treatment will be  $2 \cdot \sigma(\epsilon) / \sqrt{32} \approx .08$ , implying that the critical value ( $\alpha = .05$ ) would be  $1.65 \cdot .08 = .132$ . Hence, the power at  $d = .25$  ('large' in the sense of Cohen, standardised effect size .8) would already be over 90%, z-value being  $(.25 - .132) / .08 = 1.51$ . A  $d = .16$  ('average' in

the sense of Cohen, standardised effect size .5) would result in a z-value of  $(.16-.132)/.08=0.35$  and would result in a power of 63%. So the experimental design is adequate to detect large differences, but is weaker when the differences to be detected are not very large. Notice that power will be smaller for the individual PICI scores, as measuring individual behavioural changes usually results in slightly larger standard deviations compared to other measurements.

## 6.2 Method

We first studied the learning impact of the two types of interview coaching by conducting multivariate and bivariate tests, initially for all the different types of evaluators together, and then subsequently for the self, the peer, the coach and the suspect PICI ratings. To this end, the mean evolution of the interviewer's PICI performances ( $M T_2 - M T_1$ ) was studied on the five PICI scales for the two different training groups. Secondly, we evaluated whether the interviewers who were personally coached on a particular competences made further progression in terms of this specific interview skill compared to their peers who were coached on dissimilar competences, and also compared to their colleagues who were not personally coached. Thirdly, we studied the statistical power of the research sample with a power analysis. The results are presented in the following sequence: (i) the general additional value of personal coaching; and (ii) the development of the coached competences. Post-hoc power analysis will be used to evaluate the size of the differences found.

### 6.2.1 Participants

A total of 63 ( $M$  age = 42.5 years old,  $SD = 7$ ) police officers voluntarily participated in this study, comprising 50 male and 13 female experienced interviewers ( $M$  years of service = 19,  $SD = 8$ ) representing five police forces in three large cities in Belgium. These forces were federal or locally organised police services. A total of 81% (51 interviewers) had already successfully completed an interviewing course prior to the present training. Of these previously trained interviewers, 21 participants had followed a ten-day investigative interviewing course, and 25 participants had followed this training and a further training course called 'audiovisual interviewing of adults'; both courses are organised by the Belgian national police academy. Four participants had followed a locally organised interviewing-related course. The interviewers estimated that they conducted a mean average of ten interviews ( $SD = 9$ ) a month.

Seven coaches ( $M$  age = 56.5 years old,  $SD = 6$ ) were responsible for the training of the participating interviewers. These coaches were police officers who were considered very experienced in investigative policing by the police, and who had trained investigative



interviewing recruits and officers at one of the five provincial police academies for the past ten years. Each coach personally trained four to six colleagues for seven months (individual coaching), and also trained a group of four to six officers on one occasion (peer group coaching). Consequently, 32 interviewers participated in the individual coaching condition and 31 interviewers only took part in the pre and post interview assessments or the peer group coaching condition.

### 6.2.2 Procedure

The effects of the two coaching methods were studied by: (i) pre and post coaching interviews for all the participants of a single peer coaching condition, with the collection of 360 degree feedback and PICI assessments of self, peers, coaches and suspects after a role-played interview; and (ii) an individual coaching procedure where half the participants were personally being coached at their workplace on a approximately monthly basis.

Table 1: The ongoing individual coaching method versus the one-day peer group training

	Individual coaching	Group coaching
1	Pre coaching role play Simulated suspect interview 360 degree feedback procedure PICI assessment	Pre coaching role play Simulated suspect interview 360 degree feedback procedure PICI assessment
2	Indentification of competences that will be coached	X
3	Ongoing monthly individual coaching sessions	X
4	Post coaching role play Simulated suspect interview 360 degree feedback procedure PICI assessment	Post coaching role play Simulated suspect interview 360 degree feedback procedure PICI assessment

### 6.2.3 Questionnaire

The PICI consists of 40 different competences, such as being compliant, offensive, communicative, empathic, thorough, careful, dominant, patient, authoritative, and understanding. These can be divided into five subscales, which are named after the eight different competences that constitute the scales, namely 'careful-tenacious', 'controlled-non-reactive', 'dominant-insisting', 'communicative' and 'benevolent'. A study concerning the reliability and correlational validity of this model showed that: (i) there were satisfactory internal consistencies for the five scales; and (ii) there was a correlational association between interview competences and personality traits as defined by the five-factor model (FFM) by McCrae and Costa, 1997 (De Fruyt et al., 2006; Smets,

2009). In addition, this tool can comprehensively explain the underlying structure of a variety of potential interview behaviours. The PICI therefore enables us to quantitatively compare interviewers on all five distinctive scales.

The participating officers rated their interview performances using the PICI on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = 'hardly characteristic', 2 = 'barely characteristic', 3 = 'more or less characteristic', 4 = 'characteristic' and 5 = 'very characteristic'. In addition, their colleagues, the coach, and the suspect were asked to observe and rate each interviewer's skills. Both self ratings and peer ratings were also assessed during the pre-coaching and post-coaching interviews in order to collect interpersonal interview profiles containing five different PICI scores.

#### 6.2.4 The equivalence of the two coaching groups

As interviewing skills could depend on personal characteristics, a number of factors were taken into consideration, such as age, gender, experience and completed interview training courses when randomly assigning the interviewers to the two coaching conditions. This was done by assigning the participants into stratified subgroups before they were randomly divided into the two training samples. This randomisation was subsequently checked to avoid skewness with the aim of making the experience factor equal over both groups. The equivalence of the two coaching groups was then studied using independent sample t-tests. The results showed that the random classification was appropriate, as we could compare the independent variables at T<sub>1</sub>. Consequently, any differences at T<sub>2</sub> can therefore be attributable to the coaching interventions, rather than differences in the standard of the interviewers at the start of the study.

### 6.3 Results

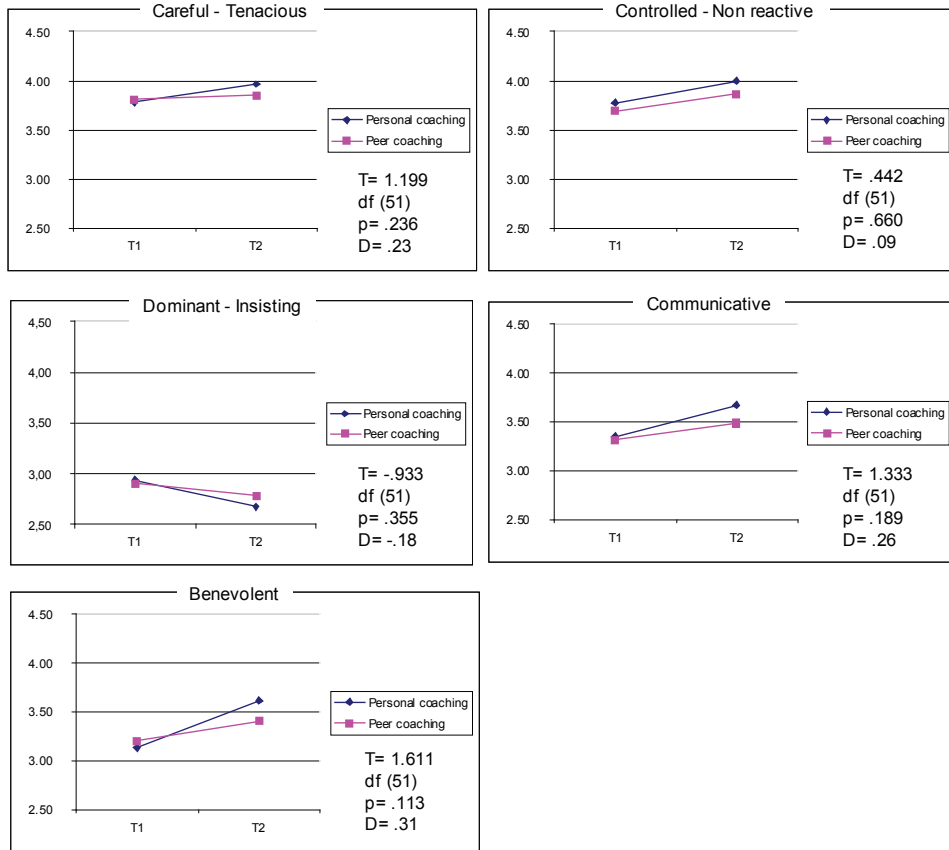
#### 6.3.1 The general additional value of individual coaching

We analysed the training differences of the two coaching conditions by studying the mean development of the interviewer's performances prior to and subsequent to the training procedures on the five PICI scales for all the evaluators ( $M_{T2} - M_{T1}$ ). We hypothesised that the individual coaching group would have improved their interview performances at T<sub>2</sub> to a greater extent than the peer coaching group.

Figure 2 summarises an overview of the research results and reports the outcomes of a repeated measures MANOVA of the two-way interview x coaching interaction utilising a 2 (pre and post coaching interview) x 2 (individual and peer group) design. Means, effect sizes, and independent t-tests of within-subject contrasts of the five PICI differences for

the pre and post coaching interviews of both the research groups are reported for all evaluators.

Figure 2: General coaching effect



Firstly, these results show little or no difference between the initial PICI scores of both coaching groups at T<sub>1</sub>, suggesting that both training conditions had similar mean PICI scores prior to the coaching. Secondly, the results show that the five PICI interview competences of both coaching groups improved during the post training interviews when compared to the mean scores of the pre coaching interviews. Additionally, as shown in Figure 2, the individually coached group had higher mean PICI scores at T<sub>2</sub> than the mean performances of the peer trained interviewers (except for the dominant-insisting scale where lower PICI scores indicate better performances). Thirdly, standardised effect sizes between approximately D = .20 and D = .30 on the different PICI scales for all the evaluators together were measured, such as D = .23 for the careful and tenacious interview performances, D = -.18 for the more dominant and insisting interviewers' behaviours,

$D = .26$  for communicative and  $D = .31$  for the benevolent interview performances. Notice that these effect sizes turn out to be smaller than we had anticipated during the design of the experiment. Although these overall effect sizes suggest the improvement of interviewing competences at T2 due to the coaching interventions, the results of the tests of significance gives  $p$ -values no lower than the 10%  $\alpha$ -level. The coaching hypothesis can therefore not statistically be rejected. In sum, a consistent improvement was evident on all the five PICI scales, and a particular improvement was observed on the empathic related skills, the Benevolent and Communicative scale. We will come back to this issue presently.

The differences among evaluators (self, peers, coaches and suspect) were also studied on the five PICI scales in order to analyse whether the differences between the five PICI competences and the evaluators equalised the main coaching effect. The results of the analysis conducted per evaluator are not reported, as they led to similar non significant results with the exception of the peer evaluators' ratings of the post interview performances of the individual versus peer coached interviewers, where a statistically significant difference on the communicative scale between the two coaching groups could be observed ( $F(1,51) = 3.41, p = 0.07, D = .37$ ). Also, the coaches observed a significant interviewing difference between the two coaching groups on the benevolent scale ( $F(1,47) = 3.80, p = 0.05, D = .39$ ). However, the results of the other analyses did not show any significant differences in terms of interview performance between the two coaching conditions over time. The small dissimilarities between the different types of evaluators: the police officers (self, coaches and peers) versus the suspects (actors) should, however, be noted. This is because the suspect rated somewhat less difference between the two coaching conditions over time, compared to the police evaluators. These results indicate that there is presumably no equalisation effect present. Consequently, the results show that the effect sizes and the values of the significance of the independent  $t$ -tests behave as they should, as they are in line with each other.

### 6.3.2 The evolution of personally coached competences

We hypothesised that the improvement of a particular interviewing competency would depend on the fact that the interviewer would be individually trained in that skill on a monthly basis in the workplace. The interviewers' mean improvement in a particular skill they were trained in was therefore analysed in relation to the other interviewers who were not trained in terms of this particular interviewing competency; it was also analysed in relation to the interviewers who received the one-day peer group coaching only. One-way ANOVAs were conducted on the five PICI scales for the diverse evaluators separately, as well as for all the evaluators together. Table 2 reports only the results of the latter ANOVAs, as no significant differences were found between the separate evaluators'

assessments.<sup>2</sup>

Table 2: Independent sample t-test for the particular evolution on personally coached competences

Scale	Group	Competency	Mean evolution	N	SD	F	df	Sig	Eta <sup>2</sup>
Careful-Tenacious	personal coaching	non-trained	0,198	15	0,262	0,711	F(2, 50)	0,496	0,028
		trained	0,180	14	0,534				
	peer coaching	0,048	24	0,447					
Controlled-Non-reactive	personal coaching	non-trained	0,096	18	0,381	2,285	F(2, 50)	0,112	0,084
		trained	0,452	11	0,309				
	peer coaching	0,175	24	0,533					
Dominant-Insisting	personal coaching	non-trained	-0,265	25	0,553	0,429	F(2, 50)	0,654	0,017
		trained	-0,250	4	0,488				
	peer coaching	-0,127	24	0,523					
Communicative	personal coaching	non-trained	0,308	20	0,298	0,896	F(2, 50)	0,415	0,035
		trained	0,344	9	0,552				
	peer coaching	0,170	24	0,431					
Benevolent	personal coaching	non-trained	0,491	18	0,547	1,276	F(2, 50)	0,288	0,049
		trained	0,469	11	0,548				
	peer coaching	0,202	24	0,732					

As shown in Table 2, the mean evolution of the individually trained competences is generally somewhat higher than the peer trained competences. Again, satisfactory effect size between approximately  $D = .26$  and  $D = .73$  can be observed. Contrary to our expectations, the difference in the evolution of a particular trained versus non-trained competency was not significant.

The results show, for example, a mean difference between the evolution of the trained and non-trained competences on the controlled-non-reactive scale:  $M$  trained = .45 versus  $M$  untrained = .09 and  $M$  peer = .17. Though this training difference is indeed not significant ( $F(2,50) = 2,285, p = .112$ ).

In many comparisons we could not reject the null hypothesis of no change (that is respectively, no difference), since strictly speaking, no result of the training has been demonstrated in these comparisons. However, a careful consideration of standardised effect sizes observed and the power of the tests used, as realised in the samples concerned, shows that the non significance of results is perhaps more a result of the rather small sample size than to the absence of change/difference. The estimated effect sizes are not large, indeed smaller than anticipated during the planning of the design, but they turned out to be within the range of 'small to intermediate' in the sense of Cohen (between .18 and .31). Indeed, for all five dimensions, personal coaching displayed a larger, though

<sup>2</sup> An output of these results can be obtained from the first author of this paper.

not significantly larger, improvement than the peer coaching training. Hence, it doesn't seem too bold to suppose that a design with a larger sample size would be able to reject the null hypothesis. In conclusion, we are inclined to characterise our results as promising: it is likely that the training has a rather small but distinct effect on interview quality and that the individual coaching procedure performs better than the peer review only procedure, to a small but significant degree. This conclusion is of course provisional, and in need of confirmation by a replication of the experiment on a larger scale.

#### 6.4 Discussion

Although some countries (such as the UK, the Netherlands, Sweden, Australia and Belgium) have made a major effort in past decades to improve their investigative interview training courses in an attempt to advance the quality of the daily interviewing of suspects, the interpersonal interviewing competences of the interviewers have not been sufficiently taken into account. The present study therefore aimed to analyse how the interpersonal interviewing skills of experienced interviewers could be optimised and further developed through the new use of an individual versus a one-day peer coaching procedure.

##### 6.4.1 The general additional value of personal coaching

Although we did not find significant results between the interviewing performances of both types of training conditions, both types of training did display a promising improvement of one or more of the five PICI interpersonal interviewing competences. Overall, the results suggest that when receiving either individual or one-day peer coaching at work, investigative interviewers can optimise personal interviewing competences, as we observed standardised effect sizes between .20 and .30 on the five PICI competences for all the different evaluators. These effect sizes were smaller than we had expected, and it seems that the error variance is rather large. Although we standardised the interview situation for all the different interviews over the duration of the study by using role-play scenarios, a high level of error is inherently linked to the complex and unpredictable nature of the investigative interview. As expected, a level of variance accompanied our PICI ratings. Subsequently, the participating interviewers commented on the difficulty of adequately scoring the 40 different PICI competences independently, as the items on each scale are relatively similar. Additionally, the compiled evaluator ratings are presumably inherently connected to personal impressions. Nevertheless, dissimilarities between the different types of evaluators, namely the police officers (coaches and peers) versus the suspect (actors) were observed.

With the exception of the overall results, the difference between the personally coached and the peer coached groups for the peer assessments on the communicative scale ( $D = .37$ ) and the coaches' assessments on the benevolent scale ( $D = .39$ ) is significant. There was a consistent improvement noticed on all the five PICI scales, though a particular significant improvement was observed on the empathic related competences, the Benevolent scale and the Communicative scale, suggesting that empathic related skills are more feasible to train. Therefore, we can question the use of the coach evaluations at T<sub>2</sub>, as they were asked to rate the interviewing performances of their own pupils. Rating their performances negatively would indirectly imply that they did not positively rate their own coaching skills. Only a replicated study could disprove this assumption.

As the peer coached group only received one day of coaching and did not received additional intensive training during the seven months, the present results are particularly attention grabbing. It would be logical to suppose that a customised individual training programme would be far more effective than a one-day peer coaching session, since it is not possible to work intensively and personally during a single group session. We therefore believe that: (1) the results reflect the effects of maturity, which is often a part of educational evaluation studies; and (2) the organisational set-up of this research design could have influenced our results. With reference to the latter, the participating interviewers of the peer coaching group knew that their colleagues were being coached personally and in a more intensive way, and that a potential difference between the two coaching groups was being studied. We can therefore assume that the participants in the peer coached group did not want to be compared to the individually coached participants. Consequently, this in- versus out-group phenomenon could also possibly explain (in addition to explaining the effects of the training they received) why the effect sizes of the two coaching groups were not significantly different. The in- versus out-group phenomenon describes how people react when divided into two different groups. People not belonging to one's own group are inevitably viewed as contemptibly different. This can result in psychological and social dynamics that are more notable within the group than between the groups. From this, we can assume that the fact that interviewers think that they need to perform better than their previous performances and need to perform better than their colleagues, who are being trained more intensively, will have an impact on their interviewing behaviour. These results suggest that the existence of two different types of coaching (a more intensive and a less intensive coaching procedure) is necessary for the actual learning impact of the less intensive one-day training programme. Nevertheless, for now we could only observe the promising impact of peer group coaching, suggesting that this once-only method is more effective than we expected. Future studies that aim to solely analyse the effects of the peer coaching condition are therefore recommended.

### 6.4.2 The evolution of personally coached competences

The improvement to a coached competency did not significantly depend on the fact that this particular interview skill was trained on an individual level at work. Interviewers who were coached in one or two interview skills showed improvement in their overall interviewing behaviour, suggesting that they improved all their five PICI competences to some extent. These results are in line with our observations, and are similar to what the interviewers and coaches themselves reflected: coaching one or two skills will implicitly improve the other PICI competences. This could possibly be explained by the fact that it is difficult to define interviewing behaviour with only one particular interviewing competence. In reality, more than one interview competences can often imply a certain interview activity or the other way around, as interviewing performances are often multifaceted. The multifaceted, rather complex nature of police interviews makes it difficult to isolate particular competences.

Also, although the interviewers chose their own points of particular interest, a focus on similar skills depending on the personal preference of the coach was observed during the different personal coaching projects. The majority of the coaches, for example, mainly paid attention to empathetic related interview behaviours such as being understandable, tender, calm, patient, and not too offensive. These interviewing skills belong to different subscales according to the PICI instrumentation. In these cases, therefore, the coaches and the interviewers did not limit their points of special interest to the benevolent scale alone. In another example, a coach focused on generating information through the use of open questions, and mainly trained competences that related to attention to detail and being thorough and careful (items on the careful-tenacious scale), being able to keep a cool head, being able to put things in perspective (items on the controlled-non-reactive scale), and being intuitive, feeling and communicative (items on the benevolent scale). These examples show that it was perceived to be difficult to only focus on one or two well defined PICI skills.

### 6.4.3 The application of coaching to interview training practices

While we do not know of any study that has experimentally studied the transfer of internal know-how from experienced police interviewers to less experienced interviewers in a real-life setting, the present results have important implications for training police investigative interviewers in the real world. As police investigative interviewers are often already aware of which personal skills their colleagues could improve (Powell et al., 2005), it seems that they could benefit from being provided with a training model to work on these skills properly in their workplace, with a non-directive, learner-centred method that focuses on ongoing feedback and internal supervision, with the specific aim of improving interpersonal interviewing competences. Furthermore, we strongly believe



this new training approach, which focuses on prolonged practising opportunities, is essential to policing and training in general, and the way in which the police organise their short-lived training practices nowadays in particular.

Applying in-house ongoing feedback during daily interview proceedings is therefore recommended, as the police organisation can benefit from such a training approach in multiple ways. *First*, the internal knowledge of important key personnel based on years of domestic experience should not be lost when these individuals leave the organisation. This interviewing knowledge can be transferred to a younger interviewing generation through an empirically structured coaching model. *Second*, the individual coaching model here studied offers interviewers the opportunity to frequently exercise their interpersonal interviewing skills during their real-life work experiences. When interviewers conduct an interview, bottleneck issues can be immediately discussed and commented on at work by referring them to the internal coach. This training procedure would therefore be an ideal and logical continuation of, for example, a short organised theoretical training course. *Third*, the coaching procedure provides a structured communication setting between the internal coach and the interviewer, where both the interviewers reflect on their interview performances based on past interview experiences. As opposed to the use of an external expert, using in-house coaches has the advantage that both the coach and the interviewer share a single frame of reference. This is presumably of help when guiding the interviewer to higher levels of quality with their interviewing skills. *Fourth*, the use of different evaluators like the coach, the peers and the actor who played the role of the suspect, produced a desirable variety of feedback. Feedback obtained from various people leads to a greater acceptance of their comments when these are unanimous, in contrast to comments that are obtained from a single source.

Despite the innovative nature of the present study and the strength of the present design for training police interviewers due to the use of different evaluators, personal coaching in the workplace and coaching through structured peer feedback, this study also has limitations that need to be taken into account. *First*, the actual real-life performances of the interviewers in the field were not studied, as all interviewing performances were completed in the aforementioned training context. Consequently, the study focused on either using simulated interviews with an actor or using the personal reflections of real-life interview experiences of the interviewers during the training. These results therefore cannot be generalised to the workplace interviews for the following reasons: (i) Although the use of role-played interviews has mainly standardisation advantages, the actual pressure accompanied with real-life interviews for both the interviewer and the suspect, cannot be experienced in full when simulating this situation. Role plays remain mainly an approximation of reality, though one that is very instructive. (ii) Reflecting on

previous personal interviewing performances can be predisposed by the minimalisation of shortcomings due to self-presentation biases.

A second limitation concerns the evaluators used. Although we used different types of evaluators when assessing the interview performances prior to and after the coaching interventions, the same evaluators were used. PICI post-coaching assessments were therefore not 'blindly' gathered as the evaluators knew which coaching condition the interviewer had received. Future research using new and 'blind' evaluators is therefore recommended.

Thirdly, these training procedures represent a whole new way of training for investigative interviewers, and would be both time and cost intensive. While certain interviewing competences are being guided to higher levels of quality, other less strong competences can be redefined and reflect the ongoing quantity of coaching. The individual coaching of interviewers during working hours would therefore need to be approved by the senior police management.

### 6.5 Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank all the police investigative interviewers who participated in this study and received the interview coaching. Special thanks go to the participating experts (the coaches) for the commitment and perseverance they showed during this experimental coaching procedure. The first author also wishes to acknowledge Prof. dr. Aldert Vrij and Jill Dealey for their helpful comments while writing this paper.

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## Appendix A

Summary of the scenarios that were used for Assessment T1

1. On Saturday afternoon, a hit and run accident took place. A cyclist is hit by a car and the driver does not stop. The cyclist is injured but is not in a life-threatening situation. A few days later a woman turns herself in to the local police station. She claims that she was the one who caused the accident with the cyclist but that she drove off in panic. An investigation in the neighbourhood reveals that her 18 year old son, who

- has no driver's licence, regularly takes his mother's car, without permission, to drive to his girl friend's house. He only does this when his father is away on business.
2. The manager of the public swimming pool files a report. Apparently a few visitors have complained to her that a certain person has an unhealthy interest in young girls who spend time in and around the swimming pool. Also, two underage girls claim that they were molested by a man when they were under the showers. A check of the national register shows that this man has a prior record of paedophilia. The records show that his wife had filed a complaint during their divorce proceedings saying that he had sexually molested their underage daughters.
  3. For the third time in the space of a few months, the firm Tabaco, a wholesaler in cigarettes and tobacco, has been robbed. For the third time, a truck carrying a large consignment of supplies is forced off the road and stopped by two cars. Three or four masked and armed men force the driver out of his cab and steal the shipment. The business owner claims during his interview that he has done everything possible to prevent the robberies. The routes that the chauffeurs are supposed to take change each time and the owner is the one who chooses them. He tells the chauffeurs himself which route to take as they are about to leave. If the owner is not around when they are ready to leave, he gives the route to his assistance, who then hands them over to the chauffeurs.
  4. The local police are called in by the owner of a carpentry business. He claims that he was attacked but that he was able to subdue the attacker. The police arrive at the scene to discover that the attacker is already dead. Even though the owner claims that he had already locked up shop, there are no signs of breaking and entering. The attacker turns out to be a notorious cocaine dealer and a friend of the owner's son.
  5. A case is opened by Jan and his sister Bea against their brother Marc and his wife Anneliese for embezzling of their inheritance. Their mother Louise, a widow, passed away two months previously. When the heirs (Jan, Bea and Marc) were called to the solicitor for the reading of the will, it became clear that their brother, Marc, had already taken possession of some of the goods (paintings, antique silver items and a few pieces of jewellery). Marc and his wife Anneliese had had ample opportunity to take these things because that had been in the mother's home often, to check up on her and to bring her food and so on. They even had keys to her home. The claimants want the valuable items to be returned.
  6. This case was filed by a couple against their babysitter, Kristien. Kristien has regularly babysat the couple's six month old daughter. She had recently been to look after the baby, the night of Saturday to Sunday because the couple wanted to attend a wedding. Without saying anything, she left on Sunday morning. On Sunday, the parents noticed that their baby was unusually quiet and kept vomiting when they tried to give her her bottle. They took the baby to hospital straight away, where the

emergency rooms diagnosed a fractured skull with possible permanent damage. The father called Kristien immediately and asked her what had happened that night. Kristien claims that the baby slept through the night without incident. In the report, the father also stated that the neighbours had noticed that Kristien had a young man visit her while she was babysitting.

#### Summary of the scenarios that were used for Assessment T2

1. This file starts with a fire that broke out in a pigeon coop. The fire spreads to the house and as a result an elderly inhabitant is seriously, but not fatally, burnt. Her husband is not harmed. The house is in a building complex. According to the fire expert, the fire in the pigeon coop may have been a result of arson. He suspects that spirits may have been used to start it. From the husband's first statement, it appears that he has had an altercation with the neighbour who lived in the house behind theirs. This neighbour is a widow who moved there with her fourteen year old daughter a couple of years previously. Her back yard backs onto the garden of the house that burnt down. Several times she has claimed that his pigeons make a mess of her house and terrace with their droppings. A neighbourhood investigation reveals that several neighbours have a problem with the pigeons. Moreover, it turns out that the widow was particularly angry with her neighbour because she suspects that he may have killed her daughter's kittens.
2. A complaint from the bank manager states: A wealthy client has reported that €100,000 left her account without her knowledge. This took place at a time when she was visiting family abroad. The management conducted an internal investigation into the matter. It turns out that this amount was drawn from the account by an authorised cheque. The authorisation signature on the cheque is not that of the client. The cheque was presented to bank clerk Anneleen C. Anneleen knows the client personally. Moreover, Anneleen is known at the bank for being an extremely thorough teller who always checks the signature and identity of the client. The management calls for the video recording of the bank counter that day to see if they can establish who it was that presented themselves to draw the 100,000. It emerges that there were no recordings taken that day due to a camera defect.
3. Dr Mertens, a radiologist, files a complaint against one of his staff members, the secretary. Dr Mertens has a private clinic for radiology and other medical scans. He employs a nurse, a medical secretary and an administrator. After about a month, he starts to get regular complaints from his patients. It turns out that fourteen of his patients discovered that they had things missing after a visit to his clinic, either money from their purses, or bank cards that were used to make purchase that same day, in some cases jewellery went missing. The amounts were always small, sometimes insignificant. A camera was installed in the changing rooms but

the burglar was never caught on camera. And yet the complaints kept coming. The nurse and the administrations person mention that a rumour has been circulating that Dr Mertens (a married man) has been having an affair with the secretary for more than a year.

4. A murder was committed in a nursing home. One of the residents, an elderly woman, was given a fatal dose of medicine used by vets to put down animals. One of the doctors who worked for the nursing home spotted it the small entry point of the injection. The day before the woman died, her husband paid her a visit. It was a known that he was the sole beneficiary of her estate. Not only that, it was common knowledge that he was having an affair with another woman from the village. However, during investigations with the personnel from the nursing home it emerged that another resident had been sharing a dinner table with the victim from the time she came to the nursing home. It seems as though the two got on very well with each other, although some of the other residents had their doubts about this. Without giving her reasons, the day before the victim died she announced to the management that she no longer wanted to share a table with her friend.
5. Three days ago, the remains of Natasha were found on the grounds of an abandoned factory. She had been murdered. The autopsy revealed that she had gunshot wounds to the chest and the back of the head. It was known that Natasha worked as a call girl for Boris who, together with his accomplice Youri, who ran an escort service. Natasha shared an apartment with her best friend, Corina, who also worked as a prostitute for Boris and his gang. An investigation in the neighbourhood brought to light that two men had removed a few items (a carpet, a cupboard and a couple of other things) from the apartment and taken them away in a small van. A search of Natasha and Corina's flat revealed little except that the flat had been thoroughly cleaned not that long ago. From photographs found in the flat it was established that the two girls had been best friends from an early age. It was Corina who first became a prostitute and she, with talk of 'easy money' and living the high life, managed to persuade Natasha to join her in a life as a call girl.
6. An owner of a clothes shop has been the victim of shoplifting several times during the past two weeks. A number of luxury items, such as a leather jacket, a fur wrap, an expensive handbag and a cashmere coat, have disappeared from the shop. The shop owner explained that expensive items had been stolen regularly before, but never at this rate. Because a new company had been running a special promotion for alarm systems, he invested in a new, and according to the information given to him, better alarm system. The person who supplied the alarm assured him that the tags were extremely difficult to remove, yet the tags had apparently been meticulously taken off the clothes and accessories and left in various places around the shop. The owner reports that the sales assistant noticed that one of their regular customers has been



in the shop almost every day. It turns out that this woman tried a lot of garments on, but that she ended up buying relatively few items.



# Chapter 7.

# General

# discussion

### 7.1 Coaching interviewers: A new training strategy

This dissertation is the culmination of an unprecedented study into the effects of coaching interviewers in the workplace. The dissertation reports the findings of two general research tracks, namely studying the Police Interview Competency Inventory - PICI - as a psychometric instrument on the one hand, and the empirical testing of two new investigative interviewing training methods on the other hand. The research comprised three consecutive empirical research phases: (i) assessing the reliability, validity and the inter-raters reliability of the research instrument, as well as the potential of the PICI in a training context; (ii) studying two new practice-oriented training methods in an experimental context, entailing the training of interviewers using interactive techniques: a series of individual training sessions versus one-off group coaching of interviewers; (iii) evaluating satisfaction levels regarding these two training methods and studying the potential for their implementation.

Both research approaches emerged from the arena of competence management, a field highly valued in the world of trade and industry. This study used managing individual interviewer competences in the work place as a way to identify internal interviewer potential to begin with, before going on to optimise these skills. In the process, both the reliability and quality of investigative interviewing as defined,<sup>1</sup> and the individual's own self-development were the focus of the study.

According to the theoretical framework used (the Five Factor Model, and the ice-berg theory), enhancing and developing individual interview competences is possible to a degree. Yet it would be unrealistic for us to expect a complete transformation of interviewer behaviour. These theories claim that, on balance, the way interviewers behave during interviews of suspects and how they differentiate themselves from their co-interviewers, i.e. their own individual interviewing characteristics and competences, depend on inherent intrapersonal factors. With this in mind, interview behaviour training demands a *learner centred* and/or customised approach focussing on the individual, one that pays sufficient attention to the specific individual's capacity to develop as opposed to a purely *teacher centred* approach. Classic teacher-oriented methods are limited in that they do not offer enough room to fully embrace the newly acquired interview behaviour and the various individual differences that this involves. As opposed to this, learner centred techniques take into account individual differences and personal issues, factors that we suspect are extremely important when it comes to adopting, in the long-term, methods that individuals are taught.

<sup>1</sup> A sound investigative interview reflects a humanitarian interviewing technique in which the interviewer employs an open, receptive attitude to establish a good yet professional relationship with the suspect, so that a professional interaction between the interviewer and the suspect consequently makes it possible, using non-suggestive, open and non-leading questions, to gather legally admissible, reliable and relevant file information.

The literature review showed that both the intrapersonal aspects of interviewers and the potential of training in the workplace are areas that are all too often underestimated. A consequence of this is that they are also underutilised in current international investigative interviewing training initiatives. Based on the literature study and the prevailing theory, it became clear that coaching interviewers in the workplace should be the basis of interpersonal interviewer competence training. Moreover, the emphasis should be on a customised approach that includes on-going expert feedback as well as one-off peer feedback, a method that additionally gives the individual interviewers ample opportunity to practice and adopt the methods. Hence the subject of this dissertation. Studying the effect of this type of interviewer coaching can be considered new and ground-breaking since empirical research of this kind has never been conducted, either academically (according to investigative interviewing literature) or in the business world.

While there are many ways to manage interpersonal interview competences, this study expressly chose to focus on *experiential workplace learning*, paying particular attention to the individual, specifically because of the interdependency of interviewer competences and personality (De Fruyt, 2002; De Fruyt et. al., 2006; Smets, 2009). The objective was to ensure that the coached interviewer internalised the process of self-reflection, so that self-knowledge of interview competences, conforming to the working definition of investigative interviewing, could become constructively integrated into daily investigative interviewing practice.

As a consequence, the coaching of interviewers took place exclusively at the level of interpersonal behaviour, while at the same time bearing in mind and taking into account the prevailing Community Oriented Policing approach, as noted in the introduction. Internal experts, the coaches, strove to further develop job-related interviewer competences, either during a series of individual one-on-one sessions, or during one-day group session. Within the general context of criminal investigations, the thrust of this research therefore involved studying the efficacy of both coaching methods: individual coaching versus one-day peer coaching.

## 7.2 Findings and conclusion

### 7.2.1 The PICI

In order to evaluate the effect of the two new interviewer training methods, we initially focussed on the criteria for success as quantified by the PICI. Alongside the research into the effectiveness of coaching interviewers, the research therefore also focussed on utilising the PICI as an assessment tool for identifying interpersonal interviewing competences.

During the dissertation, we also referred to competence management so that we could justify the sequencing of the research phases. Correct and efficient competence management requires a process in which the various phases follow one another chronologically. For instance, analysing the requisite competences for a specific job must take place in the initial stages of the process. If this is not done, then the next stage, assessing and developing these competences, will fail (Lievens, 2006). After all, if one is to develop and manage competences successfully, one must first be in a position to describe these competences correctly. I.e. Which competences are there, and how can we measure them?

De Fruyt et al.'s original study (2006) into interpersonal interviewer competences formed part of this essential analytical phase into the procedural organisation of interviewer competence management. This research resulted in the definition of investigative interviewer competences and the compilation of the PICI. However, this initial study showed that research into the validity and reliability of this test instrument was in a premature phase and follow-up research was called for.

Given that the PICI was the basis of our study into identifying and coaching individual interviewer competences, and subsequently analysing the effects of this coaching, the following research activities and their relevant hypotheses were formulated:

- (1) Studying the validity of the instrument.

**Hypothesis 1:** The nomological interview competency network as defined by the Police Interviewing Competency Inventory comprises five sub-scales and accompanying interview items and is capable of profiling interrogation competencies quantitatively.

- (2) During the group coaching sessions, and likewise the assessment sessions T<sub>1</sub> and T<sub>2</sub>, we used the 360 degree feedback method so that we could gain an educational perspective. This method entails gathering feedback from the various individuals involved, in particular the coach, the peers, the actor playing the suspect and the researcher. In order to assess inter-rater performance vis a vis using the PICI as a measurement tool, we studied inter-rater reliability during a later phase of the research. Regardless of the rater using the PICI, this instrument should still be capable of reliably identifying and developing interpersonal interviewer competences.

**Hypothesis 2:** Is the information gathered using PICI in self-assessments and evaluations by others similar?

### 7.2.1.1 *Validity and the nomological interview competency network*

During the first research phase, we investigated the validity of the PICI by conducting a replication study.

The PICI is an instrument with a five dimensional structure, designed to assess interviewing competences (De Fruyt et al., 2006). Based on self-rated interview competences, this tool for police interviewers enables a quantitative comparison between interviewers, but could also potentially be used for assessment and development purposes. The aim of the first study of the present dissertation was to replicate and extend the initial research findings of the original study of De Fruyt et al. (2006). We did so by studying the internal consistency and correlational validity of the PICI measurement tool. Guided by the aforementioned study of De Fruyt et al. (2006), this study first extended the original list of competence items to include nine new competences that had not been previously identified. Second, whereas the previous sample consisted of 230 experienced police interviewers, the present sample was extended to include inexperienced police investigators, creating a more general and representative sample of 549 police officers. We hypothesised that the additional competence items would not influence the stability of the police interviewing competency constructs, and assumed that experience would have no effect on the structure of the inventory. The data provided strong support for both these hypotheses. The results show that (1) the newly defined competence items and (2) experience of the interviewers have no additional value in relation to defining the structure of the interview competences measurement tool. The results are theoretically consistent and therefore provide strong evidence for a nomological interviewing competency network representing construct validity.

These results showed that interviewer experience and additional interviewer competences do not influence the five PICI constructs. This means that we can conclude with a relative degree of certainty that the instrument measures what it is intended to measure, namely individual differences in interviewer competences. On the basis of this, Hypothesis 1 is acceptable and the potential of the PICI as an assessment instrument can be exploited further. It is worth mentioning that experienced police officers find the 'benevolent' items less applicable to their personal interviewing manner than inexperienced police officers did. These results confer with evaluation literature where interviewing deficiencies to this day are still described as a suggestive, manipulative way of interviewing as opposed to an informative, empathetic and information gathering interview style (Williamson, 1993; Bull & Milne, 2004). Experienced interviewers scores were significantly lower for attributes related to empathy in comparison to their less experienced colleagues. We can ascribe this difference to interviewer experience in as much as experienced

officers assign different connotations to empathy on the basis of their careers and actual interviewer experience. This is in line with the interviewing deficiencies reported by previous research, and can be described as being less/insufficiently capable of putting oneself in the position of the interviewee. It could also be that this capacity for empathy is linked to staff turnover in the sense that more empathetic people tend not to sustain long careers as criminal investigators. This difference in empathy between experienced and inexperienced officers could also be ascribed to the effects of maturity.

#### 7.2.1.2 Inter-rater reliability and practical use of the PICI

Due to the potential that the PICI has as a self-assessment tool for interpersonal interviewer behaviour, and presumably also as a peer or supervisor rating scale in a training context (De Fruyt et al., 2006), the PICI was assigned a prominent role in the design and objectives of this research. During the coaching experiment, alongside assessing the effectiveness of the coaching, we also studied whether the PICI could function as a reliable evaluation instrument for others, as well as whether it in actual fact is a suitable tool for post-training evaluation.

We studied the PICI rating behaviour of the different evaluators on the PICI scale level. The results of the factor analysis of the five PICI scales for the self and other evaluations show a high percentage of total variance, eigenvalues and Cronbach's alphas when the evaluators (peers, coaches and suspects) assessed someone other than themselves. During self-assessment, somewhat lower Cronbach's alpha values and percentages of total variance were noted. See also Appendix B.

As this is the first time that the PICI has been used as an assessment instrument to measure the success of an interview training, it enables us to report on some initial observations regarding the PICI in practice. Firstly, it may seem complex to assess all 40 of these competencies at the same time during one single interview. However (i) not all competencies are dealt with during an interview and (ii) not all competencies apply to every interviewer. A situation with, for example, a verbally aggressive suspect, will mainly test competencies related to the 'careful-tenacious', 'communicative' and 'benevolent' dimensions, while the 'controlled-non-reactive' competencies will only be tested to a minor extent. Second, when studying the rating behaviour of the different evaluators on the scale level, these results suggest that when the participants assessed others they rated the eight PICI items of the five scales in a less discriminating way. When assessing others, the internal consistency of the PICI scales was high and located between  $\alpha = .92$  and  $\alpha = .97$ . This indicates that they are analogue items. Combining items will therefore not affect the reliability and internal validity of the five PICI scales. Moreover, merging interview items per scale would probably be more feasible and therefore recommended.



When using the PICI, interviewers noted that it was time consuming to rate all 40 items, and that fewer items would be more practicable. When the participants were assessing themselves, the results showed that the Cronbach's alpha values were somewhat lower; between  $\alpha = .86$  and  $\alpha = .92$ . This means that the scores for these various items are more heterogeneous, and that there is a wider spread between the rates of the different items. This suggests that when evaluating themselves, interviewers are more discriminatory than when they are evaluating others. It is therefore desirable when assessing interview competency, to collect evaluations from different people. Nevertheless the Cronbach's alphas of both evaluations (others and self) are close to each other and are high, indicating inter-rater-reliability. Third, it was noticed that as the coaching process moved forwards, participants and coaches used the PICI competencies more frequently when discussing their daily interview performances. Accordingly, the PICI provides a general language with which interviewers can discuss their interview competencies, which is useful when training interviewers.

### 7.2.2 Coaching

As noted in the introduction and in chapter 6, the experimental research phase addressed the efficacy of the coaching methods that were developed especially for this study, by studying the learning effect of both coaching methods.

To assess whether the training sessions yielded an improvement in the interpersonal PICI competence level, the following hypotheses were formulated:

**Hypothesis 4:** Monthly feedback of police interviewers in a one-to-one setting with a personal coach will lead to insight in individual interview competency level, and will subsequently improve interviewers' professional interview competency behaviour. In other words, personal coaching of interviewers will improve their PICI interviewing competency level.

**Hypothesis 5:** Individually coaching interviewers is more efficient than a one-day peer group feedback session and will improve interviewers' personal PICI competency level more than a one-day training session with peers.

#### 7.2.2.1 Individual versus group coaching

##### *General conclusion*

The main findings of this study show that the PICI competences have an interpersonal character and that the PICI assessment instrument is capable of measuring professional investigative interviewer behaviour quantitatively and reliably. Furthermore, the

coaching results showed that - after a PICI assessment has been carried out - training these interpersonal interviewer competences results in a general evolution and further development of the five PICI interviewer competences and related interviewer behaviour. These results were did not reflect significant differences yet they suggest that regardless of the coaching method used, paying attention to the interviewer's interpersonal aspects during coaching of interview behaviour was successful and resulted in a promising learning effect. While significant differences were not discovered, interview performance after both coaching interventions (repeated individual coaching and one-off group coaching sessions) resulted in better evaluations from the various raters, regardless of the coaching method used.

Despite the hypothesis that presumed that the more intensive the training and contact between the coach and the interviewer, the stronger the effect of the coaching would be, we see that both coaching interventions resulted in progress at the level of interpersonal interviewer behaviour. Although the results showed that repeated individual coaching sessions with experienced interviewers resulted in slightly better general improvement in comparison to one-off group coaching, the difference was small and not significant.

In many comparisons we therefore could not reject the two null hypothesis of no evolution. Strictly speaking, no result of the two trainings has been demonstrated in these comparisons. However, a careful consideration of the standardized effect sizes observed and the power of the tests used shows that the non significance of results is perhaps due to the small sample size rather than the absence of evolution. Estimated effect sizes were not large, indeed smaller than anticipated during the planning of the design, but turned out to be in the range of 'small to intermediate' in according to Cohen (between .18 and .31). Indeed for all five dimensions, personal coaching displayed a larger, albeit not significantly larger, improvement compared to peer coaching training. Hence, it seems not too bold to suggest that in a design with larger sample sizes, null hypotheses would have been rejected. We are therefore inclined to characterize our results as promising: it is likely that both trainings methods have a small but distinct effect on interview quality, and that the individual coaching procedure does better - to a small but distinct degree - than the peer review only procedure. Of course, this statement is provisional, and in need of confirmation by a replication of the experiment on a larger scale

#### *Peer feedback*

The results of the group coaching, during which the interviewers were given one-off feedback from their colleagues on their interview performance, produced more evolution in individual interview behaviour than had been initially been presumed (cf. the small difference in the results of the two training methods). The prediction had been that the

effect of this training method would be negligible. These results suggest that one-day group coaching has more effect than initially expected given that the results of the two coaching methods do not differ significantly. As a consequence, the results of this study show that it is not only expert feedback and personal counselling that are efficient and valuable, but that observing and commenting on one another's interviewer performance proved to be extremely valuable and effective since these sessions resulted in very promising progress in interpersonal interviewing skills.

In general, the coaching results are all the more positive and valuable given that the coached interviewers were experienced investigators with an average age of 42.5 years ( $SD = 7$ ) and that 81% of these interviewers had only enjoyed a brief, theoretical training in investigative interviewing techniques during their career as police officers. Despite this, we managed with the help of the two coaching methods to improve the officers' interviewing behaviour, even after all their years as investigative interviewers. Using peer feedback and self-reflection, entrenched interviewing habits and patterns were given critical consideration and less appropriate behaviour was amended. Against the background of the theoretical framework and the relationship between the interviewing competences and interviewer personality, this change in behaviour is particularly noteworthy given that we did not expect, beforehand, to see major effect sizes.

In summary, it is our conclusion that these research results do not show significant differences between the performances of the interviewers from the various training groups, based on comparisons of evaluators' PICI assessments. This, however, does not imply that the training efforts did not have the desired effect and hoped for advantages, on the contrary. As noted at length in chapter 6, the research findings suggest that both coaching methods consistently led to interpersonal improvement in interviewer behaviour, so that we were able to establish general improvement in terms of competence levels. The positive effect sizes suggest that both coaching methods led to developments in personal interviewer competences. We are therefore also convinced that the insignificant research results could be a consequence of relatively small differences in coaching that, due to the number of observations, had low impact. An investigation using a larger sample size would presumably make the existence of these small differences in the coaching interventions visible. On the basis of these research results we conclude that both individual interviewer coaching and organising peer feedback sessions can effectively add value and have the potential to improve the quality of daily investigative interviewing practices.

#### *'Benevolent' and 'Communicative'*

Whether or not there was any significant development of skills depended on the kind of

competence training and the type of evaluator. When we studied the results of the five general competences and the various evaluators' scores independently of each other, we noticed that it was easier to train interviewers in some competences, such as interviewer items on the Benevolent and Communicative scale, than in others. These competences reflected more evolution at T2. This was not only obvious from the acceptable effect sizes, respectively  $D=.31$  and  $D=.26$ . The results of peer evaluations on the Communicative scale and the results of the coaches evaluations on the Benevolent scale also showed significant differences in interviewer performance between the two measurement occasions.

Moreover, the research findings showed that experienced interviewers evaluated personal interviewer behaviour as significantly less empathetic as inexperienced police officers did (chapter 3) but that empathy related interviewer competences, such as communicativeness and benevolence were much easier to teach than the other PICI competences. These innovative training insights are extremely relevant in view of the working definition for investigative interviewing in which a humanitarian interviewing style is defined as a method that results in more reliable file information (Williamson, 1993).

From this we can conclude that empathetic and communicative interviewer behaviour is easier to learn and to teach than adopting a cautious and controlled interviewing manner, and discarding dominant, authoritarian and/or severe interviewer behaviour. We could explain this by pointing to the international academic focus on the benefits of empathy, and that, as a consequence, most motivated interviewers are familiar with it as a concept.

Related to this trend, we can explain the significant differences between the various interviewer competences on the Benevolent and Communicative scale by pointing to the fact that the coaches give priority to this notion of empathy and empathy related attitudes and are keen to teach them, in line with this international focus. This is presumably linked to the fact that it is more enjoyable to teach new things, things that the trainee is open to, than to teach people to break habits or change behaviour, subjects that may well be sensitive issues to some individuals. Based on what they knew of current empirical interviewing knowledge, the seven internal experts who participated were convinced of the necessity and positive impact of using empathy during interviews, and of its importance for discovering the truth and gathering relevant information. The interviewers in training fully supported the coaches' focus on empathy. The self-selecting character of the sample may well have played a role in this: we can describe those who volunteered as by definition more empathetic than the non-response group. For more on this subject, see the discussion about the sample and the voluntary nature of participation further on in this chapter.

As a consequence, throughout the research we observed various kinds of empathy, making it possible for us to differentiate between natural and genuine empathy as opposed to empathy displayed in the context of criminal investigations and as a tool to glean information. Those interviewers who displayed a natural empathy were encouraged by the coaches, who saw it as a strength, to be developed and integrated in their daily work. Other interviewers were trained to use empathetic interviewer behaviour, with a constant emphasis on the advantages that it brings with it for investigative interviewing. This generally manifested itself during the interviews in a form of empathy that could best be described as perfunctory.

As noted in chapter 1, research shows that when juveniles are interviewed in an empathetic manner during the initial phases of an interrogation - the rapport building phase - their responses to questions are subsequently more detailed and contain more information in later interview phases than when there was no friendly and empathetic initial contact (Sternberg et al., 1997; Sternberg et al., 2001). An empathetic interviewing style implies an open, non-judgemental, information-gathering attitude in which asking open questions is an essential factor. Asking open questions also leads to more information (Fisher, Geiselman & Amador, 1989; George and Clifford, 1992; Sternberg et al., 1999; Orbach et al., 2000; Sternberg et al., 2001; Lamb et al., 2002; Powell et al., 2008.)

The focus on empathetic and communicative behaviour leads us, however, to critically question the value of the significance differences in the ratings of the coaches between the two coaching groups as measured at T2. By not judging empathy competences of those who were given individual coaching to have significantly improved implies that they do not rate their personal training and coaching capacities positively. Moreover, we could attribute the considerable evolution in communicative and empathetic interviewer behaviour, after both types of coaching, to the self-selective character of the sample. (See the discussion about the sample further on in the text).

On the basis of these metric indications, we can evaluate the general findings regarding empathy and communicativeness positively. These results are informative and lead to new insights regarding the adequate training of police interviewers, as well as insights into what this training should comprise: training officers to be empathetic and communicative during investigative interviewing, such as being empathetic and asking open questions, in an interactive coaching context that pays attention to interpersonal interviewer attributes, leads to improvements in competences and related interviewer attitudes.

### 7.2.2.2 Evolution of personally coached competences

Based on the results of this research, the evolution of a competency does not significantly depend on the fact that this interview skill was specifically trained in person at work. In fact the results suggest that interviewers who were coached on one or two interview competences enhanced their interview behaviour more thoroughly, suggesting that they further developed the five PICI competences in general as opposed to specific competences. These results are in line with our observations, and are similar to what the interviewers and coaches observed. These findings confirm the similarity of the items as a substitute of the somewhat rigidly defined items within the PICI tool. In practice it is difficult to define interviewing behaviour with one interview competence. In reality more than one competence can often imply a certain interview activity. The reverse also applies: diverse interview behaviour can be defined with one PICI item. This enabled the coaches to focus on a selection of comparable PICI items instead of distinguishing well-defined points of special interest. Although the interviewers choose their own points of special interest, a focus on similar competences, depending on the personal preference of the coach, was observed during the different personal coaching projects. As discussed previously in this chapter, most coaches mainly paid attention to empathic related interview behaviour as being understanding, gentle, calm, patient, not too offensive. These interview skills belong to different subscales according to the PICI. For example, the coach and the interviewer therefore did not limit their points of special interest to the Benevolent scale alone. Another coach for example focussed on generating information by using open questions and mainly trained competences such as paying attention to detail, being thorough and careful (items of the Careful-Tenacious scale) and being able to keep a cool head, being able to put things in perspective (items of the Controlled-Non-reactive scale), having good intuition, feeling and being communicative (items of the Benevolent scale). These examples show that only focusing on one or two well-defined PICI competences is impractical and this reflects the strength of coaching as a training methodology. It may be assumed that this could explain the insignificant difference between interviewers' mean evolution of a particular competency in relation to the other interviewers who were not trained with regard to this interview competency. Although the general effect sizes of the Controlled-Non-reactive for all the evaluators is low ( $D = .09$ ), suggesting no major difference between the two coaching conditions, (see also the results reported in chapter 6), this result disguises the considerable mean differences between the interviewers who had been specifically coached on this competency and the interviewers who did not receive any training in this interview skill. Apparently the coaches did succeed in this respect in significantly improving the interview competency of some interviewers in the group who received personally training.

In summary we can conclude that if the interviewers are given long-term individual training by a personal coach, for pre-defined aspects, it is possible to detect a general coaching effect, as quantified by the five PICI competences, and not purely for coached interviewer competences. This result suggests that by coaching one or two interview competences, other competences are affected and as a consequence the entire interviewer behaviour of the individual is influenced. This finding emphasises the strengths and efficacy of coaching as a training technique and reinforces its positive impact on good quality management of interviewer competences.

### 7.2.2.3 Implementation opportunities

#### *Implementing coaching and the self-assurance of the trainees*

The effectiveness of interviewer training depends not only in the quality of the training course, but also on how the course is implemented and subsequently received by the interviewers. These are all factors that influence the learning effect. The second research phase investigated these factors and the implications that they have for the validation of coaching officers in the workplace.

As was discussed in detail in the second paper, the research findings suggest that individual coaching of interviewers' leads to more ease and self-assurance on the part of the interviewers. The interviewers were not only enthusiastic about participating in the research, they learnt from their own experience, their motivation increased and individual and peer feedback was welcomed with an open mind and keenness to learn.

The interviewers own views on how the training went are relevant to a successful validation and implementation of these innovative, practice-oriented training programmes. After all, this kind of training requires a lot of effort and active participation on the part of the interviewers. Nevertheless, 72% of the interviewers were very enthusiastic and 53% of the interviewers stated that if a similar programme were offered again, they would definitely take part; 62% said that they felt that they and their competences had improved as a result of the course. This enthusiasm and recognition of the benefits is favourable but it should be viewed with caution. E.g. what to do with interviewers who become overconfident about their competences without an accompanying progress in interviewing skills? (For more information on this subject, see the discussion about methodological issues, limitations and future research).

The officers who underwent the training noted that they felt more self-assured. They also stated that they were more aware of both their verbal and non-verbal interviewing behaviour as well as of the interviewing techniques and methods used. This led to a process of self-reflection, insight and development. As a result, interviewers were able to use their

capacities to full effect and so optimise the quality of the interviews. Consequently this training initiative ties in personal development, one of the building blocks of competence oriented training within the Belgian federal investigation department.

Self-confidence and self-esteem are two essential components for developing personal talent and potential (Potter, 1994). Using specific techniques, such as positive feedback and learning through experience under guidance from the coach, can impact positively on the behaviour of the trainee. For this reason, we deliberately chose a system that enables internal coaches to pass on their know-how, internal coaches who in turn are under guidance from external experts. Consequently, teaching and learning coaching techniques were a pivotal part of the train-the-trainer programme, a system in which internal coaches were taught these and other methods, and were evaluated accordingly. As noted previously, using internal coaches has several advantages, such as their proximity and availability, and their ability to train others based on their personal experience. The expertise and the status that these coaches bring to the party has undoubtedly contributed to the success of both coaching interventions, success that can be measured by the relatively low drop out rate.

Based on the research findings regarding implementation opportunities, we can accept the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3:** Investigative interviewers are prepared to engage in a prolonged supervision with a personal coach to ensure the optimization of interpersonal interview competences whereby they need to reflect on their performance and capabilities.

#### *Using internal coaches*

Within the context of studying the impact of the two training procedures, we observed positive indications about a preference for internal experts. At first we were concerned that interviewers may not accept the expert feedback of a peer eagerly. However, it emerged that investigative interviewers were more likely to accept a peer expert's feedback than an outsider's feedback. At the beginning of the experiment, we noticed that interviewers were much more inclined to accept feedback from the internal expert than from the researcher, despite the fact that the researcher attended all the group sessions as well as a number of individual coaching sessions. Only as the study progressed and the interviewers found that the researcher had proved to their satisfaction that she had sufficient expertise herself, was her external feedback accepted. As previously stated, this may rest on the aforementioned dynamics regarding a police versus academic culture.



### 7.3 Methodological issues, limitations and future research

These research results are very promising and demonstrate that the effect of the coaching was positive. However, we recommend repeating the research while manipulating the dependent variables so that the effect of these variables can be studied in greater detail. The dependent variables are: the number of feedback sessions, the length of the training/experiment, the length of time between the individual coaching interventions, the characteristics of the coach and the presence of a non-training research group.

The relationship between personality and the quality of the interviews should be studied more specifically so that new insights can be integrated as efficiently as possible into police training practices. In particular, the effect of coaching on interpersonal competences related to empathy, benevolence and communicative interview behaviour should be studied more closely so that a possible empirical explanation can be found for the fact that interview competences, based on these research results, are easier to train than the other PICI components.

Despite the large-scale experimental structure of this research design, that enabled us to study the success of interviewer coaching in the work place, future research into the training of interpersonal interviewer competences is advisable due to a number of methodological shortcomings regarding the sample size, the evaluators, satisfaction of the interviewers who were trained, the relevance of coaching investigators in judicial terms, and the long-term effect of individual versus group coaching of interviewers.

#### 7.3.1 Sample

The most prominent limitations in terms of the sample were its size and self-selective character. The sample numbered 63 participants (32 versus 31 per training type) and as such was relatively large in comparisons with previous studies.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, realising this coaching experiment at organisational level was significant and unprecedented. A larger sample size is however recommended for enabling metric conclusions to be drawn with respect to the effect of the two different types of training intervention, as noted earlier in this chapter. The results of this research showed an insignificant difference between individual and group coaching on the one hand and between the two assessments on the other. Yet the effect sizes and the results of the power analysis show promising results. It is possible that this insignificant result can be explained by the relatively small number of trained interviewers. Therefore a larger sample is recommended should we wish to study the effect of both training types at a metric level.

<sup>2</sup> In the evaluation literature, samples ranged in size ranged from 5 to 7, and at most 12 participants (Fisher et al., 1989; George & Clifford, 1992; Memon et al., 1994; Sternberg et al., 1997; Aldridge and Cameron, 1999; Sternberg et al., 1999; Warren et al., 1999; Sternberg et al., 2001; Orbach et al., 2000; Lamb et al., 2002; Powell et al., 2008).

The self-selective nature is the second limitation of the sample. Investigators working for the seven investigation departments where the interview experts and coaches were selected from (by the police) were asked to participate on a voluntary basis. This leads us to suspect that the profile of those who did not take part differs from that of the group of interviewers that were prepared to develop their interviewing competences. Despite the empirical and experimental nature of this study, the research was mainly seen as a training opportunity. This means that we can typify those detectives that did not take part as those who most likely did not consider it necessary to further develop their interviewer professionalism, and therefore decided not to undergo additional training. We may, however, question whether their assessment of these skills and choice of these officers is in fact justified.

As opposed to this non-response group, we can describe those that did participate as motivated officers that deliberately chose to be trained, generally interview on a more conscious level and are capable of critically reflecting about their own interviewer behaviour. These characteristics undoubtedly affected the training interventions, which leads us to believe that those that volunteered to take part are likely to be easier to train than the non-response group. The sample must therefore be seen as an insufficiently realistic reflection of the whole population and as such non-representative. The effect of the various training interventions was central to the coaching experiment and as such more important as representativeness of the sample. Representativity and generalisability were not the primary objectives of the experiment. If we compare the volunteers from the seven local and federal participating investigation departments to one another, we can see a certain degree of consistency in terms of willingness to engage. This engagement and the way the participants handled the feedback lead us to believe that we indeed worked with the proverbial cream of the crop.

#### *Future research*

A repeat study based on a larger sample size and neutral sample selection would introduce more clarity to these research results and offer more insight into the role of the participants who volunteer and how this affects the training interventions. Further study would also clarify issues to do with the generalisability of this kind of sample versus the whole research population.

#### 7.3.2 The same raters

A major limitation of the research design was the fact that the same evaluators were used on both T1 and T2 assessments. This meant that the same raters and the researcher evaluated professional interviewer performances both before and after the individual coaching interventions. Only the actor who played the suspect during the role playing

exercises was different. Using the same evaluators to judge on both occasions reduces objectivity. During the first measurement occasion (T<sub>1</sub>) the raters may have formed an impression of a person that influences their perception of that person on the second occasion (T<sub>2</sub>). Moreover, we may question the extent to which perceptions of interviewer performance were already formed during the first measurement (T<sub>1</sub>) considering that colleague interviewers from the same department were grouped together for the assessments and group coaching sessions. It is therefore advisable to use different interviewers/evaluators for the assessments and/or to have external evaluations.

However, organising group coaching or assessments with external, non-police force interviewers that have nothing to gain directly from the educational component of the feedback would not constitute an ideal learning environment. After all, this would preclude learning about interview performance from peers. Furthermore, it should be noted that the presence of non-police force people was barely tolerated during the observation and discussion of interview methods and techniques. This calls for a different approach to gathering of external evaluations. Consequently, gathering PICI assessments from new external - i.e. evaluators from outside the police force - based on, for example, the video recordings that were made would need to be organised. Most of the participants agreed with this, but not all participants were prepared to let external people see the recordings of their interviews.

#### *Future research*

We therefore recommend conducting follow-up research in which the type and capacity of the various evaluators is manipulated and new, external evaluators are used. This should be done with two things in mind: the objectivity criteria mentioned above and the further investigation of PICI inter-rater reliability.

#### 7.3.3 The satisfaction evaluation

As discussed in chapter 5, interviewer satisfaction regarding their participation, the execution and the content of both training methods was discussed at length. The conclusion is that the majority of the interviewers perceived personal and/or professional progress as a result of participating in one of the two coaching methods. Also, during the second assessment, we observed that the interviewers gave a more self-assured and confident impression. The interviewers also voiced the opinion that they felt that they had made progress in the way they conducted interviews.

Chapters 5 and 6 described how the participants from the individual coaching sessions were coached in various interviewer competences. Certain interviewer competences were defined as action points on the basis of suggestions from the coach and the wishes

of the interviewers. For this reason, individual coaching concentrated on various interviewer competences as defined by the PICI. A limitation regarding the satisfaction assessment of the coaching methods is that it is not clear whether the satisfaction and progress expressed is related to any actual evolution resulting from individually coached interviewer competences.

When behavioural change is the object, as was the case in these training interventions, false perceptions of progress, and accompanying self-assurance, can result in regression instead of improvement in interviewing skills. If detectives think that they are better at interviewing than they are in reality, this does not result in a positive learning effect (the objective of the experiment) or general improvement, which are the ultimate objective of this study.

During the first measurement occasion (T<sub>1</sub>), there was initial resistance to evaluating one another's interviewing performance, and the openness that goes with this. For this reason, even more emphasis was placed on the condition of anonymity. Assuring anonymity strengthened the trust between the participants and the researcher; it presumably also impacted on the success of the experiment at an organisational level. But this precluded being able to analyse the data, i.e. the PICI scores of particular interviewers and their own personal development, from a specific, personal point of view and in terms of their satisfaction or not with their own performance. As a result of this, it is not clear whether satisfaction is related to the degree in which the interviewer actually progressed. However, given that the results of this study show positive progress in terms of interviewer performance at T<sub>2</sub> compared to T<sub>1</sub>, we are of the opinion that satisfaction levels can be justified.

#### *Future research*

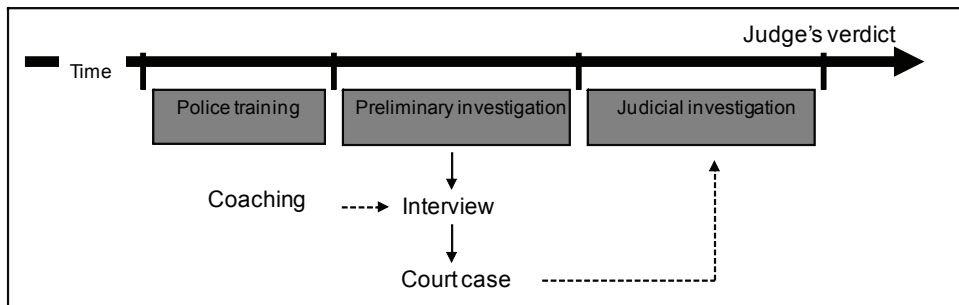
Were those investigators who made more progress more satisfied with their interviewer behaviour and progress with PICI competences than those who were less satisfied? What is this satisfaction based on? Is satisfaction related to progress? Do coaches influence satisfaction levels? Follow-up research using systematically organised and integrated satisfaction assessments during the coaching procedure would be able to answer these questions.

#### 7.3.4 Relevance of coaching for the quality of the judicial procedure

The final result of an investigative interview is a *police record* i.e. a *written statement*. This written statement is the most essential means of communication between the police and lawyers, public prosecution and judges. However, investigative interviewing researchers have paid scant attention to the content and form of written statements. This is quite

remarkable given that the end-users, such as lawyers, public prosecutors and judges, need to carefully study this investigative interviewing information in preparation for the judicial examination and accompanying decision-making process (see Figure 1). Likewise they need to study the actual police file, of which written interview statements are an essential part, prior to a possible acquittal or conviction. Moreover the police file consists mainly of the sequence of written statements, especially in countries, like Belgium, with an inquisitorial legal system. These written statements can be seen as a central depot from which the different legal professionals should extract their information. A written police statement as the outcome of an investigative interview is therefore highly valued and, most importantly, reflects the legal finality and quality of a suspect interview.

Figure 1 Relevance of coaching



At an initial level, the goal of police investigative interviewing of suspects is quite straightforward, namely gathering relevant and reliable information by questioning the suspect in order to discover the truth. Conducting an investigative interview is, however, as an intricate procedure whereby interviewers need to complete a number of tasks. Although the primary task of the interviewer is to interview a suspect in a fair and reliable manner, at the end a written statement is required. This written statement is vital for further legal purposes, as lawyers and judges form an opinion about the suspect's innocence or guilt based on it. In short, a written police statement of an investigative interview can be seen as the final deliverable of a police interview. As interviewing suspects is a complex job, assessing a police statement is also an intricate task. Komter (2003) described assessing police statements as a complex process of compiling information:

*'(a) a police interviewer must conduct an interview with a potentially unreliable source of information; (b) must write down the suspect's own words in order to do justice to the suspect's version of the events, but must also draw up a record that can serve as a legal piece of evidence; and (c) in order to bring this off, the*

*interviewer must coordinate activities of talking, listening, and typing.'* (Komter, 2003, p. 209).

Despite the complexities that accompany the verbalising of an interview and the fact that a written statement, police report, is the most important communication medium between the police and the justice department, this research did not study the relationship between coaching and the final written report of the suspect interview. However, this was initially the intention and preparations for this aspect of the study were made when designing the coaching experiment.

Initially the intention was to study empirically the relationship between coaching interpersonal interviewing competences and its effect on the content of written reports. Originally the interviewers were asked to report on the interview information that they had gleaned from the fictitious interview (the role play) as they normally would in practice. For this they were given 40 minutes. During this time, the interviewers were not expected to give a full report or write out a full statement; they were instructed that a brief summary would suffice for the intended research objectives. Due to the relatively large number of participants (63), it was not feasible from an organisational point of view to let each interviewer complete a suspect interview. Participating interviewers and coaches were of the opinion that it was not possible to complete these two assignments within the 40 minute set aside for them. The time restriction was considered to exert pressure that would have a negative effect on compiling the interview. Resistance from the interviewers in this respect rendered it impossible to complete this part of the research empirically. This dynamic and observations of what takes place in practice leads us to believe that the combination of both interview tasks, namely interrogation on the one hand and verbalising on the other, is insufficiently integrated in interviewing practice in terms of quality. We therefore believe that at the moment interviewers are primarily concentrating on adequate and reliable interviewing when questioning a suspect, and are less focused on translating the received information onto paper. This can be explained by the current interview training programmes which mainly focus on teaching reliable interview methods and techniques and pay less attention to compiling written statements. This can be confirmed by the fact that today's written police statements can be described as diverse and unstructured as there are no guidelines for the writing of statements.

In summary, it is our opinion that an effective interview training is one that ensures that interviewers apply what they have learned correctly, and this includes long after the course has finished as well. Correct and adequate interviewing is essential for generating reliable information and is therefore also crucial to the quality of the judicial file. A good quality interview is in this respect a discussion that leads to valuable and reliable file

information. The transcription of an interview, the written statement, is one of the most important components of a judicial file and has a crucial informational function (Ponsaers, Mulkers & Stoop 2001), bearing in mind the victims of miscarriages of justice who have served prison sentences unjustifiably. Acquiring reliable interview competences correctly and sufficiently by applying specific interactive educative techniques, such as role-play and/or expert feedback, and organising interviewing and supervision opportunities is therefore essential. Unfortunately, this research does not enable us to assess whether these essential educational coaching techniques also contribute to improving the judicial outcome of an investigative interview, i.e. good quality written statements.

#### *Future research*

Follow-up research could study the coaching of interviewer competences in combination with the coaching of verbalisation skills. This research could investigate whether interview and verbalisation techniques can be integrated efficiently within the same training course, or whether it would be better to teach these skills in two separate courses. The question is whether coaching interviewer competences exclusively leads to information that is more useful, and whether this information in turn leads to more exhaustive investigations. Or is it the written transcript of the interview alone that is responsible for further and more in-depth investigations?

#### 7.3.5 The long-term effect of coaching

Previous studies show that interviewers lapse into old patterns and habits after short-term interview training is over (Fisher et al., 1989; George and Clifford, 1992; Orbach et al., 2000; Lamb et al., 2002; Powell et al., 2008). The training methods used in this study distinguish themselves from traditional training in as much as during the process of the coaching interventions we focussed on two coaching elements that had never been used before, namely (1) the interviewer's interpersonal potential or interviewer competences and (2) developing these competences through individual training sessions that were constantly adjusted to suit the specific individual as opposed to one-off peer feedback. The assumption here is that insufficient attention for interpersonal interview capacities leads to acquiring behavioural changes that are not stable. As opposed to this, using deliberate practices and coaching elements that have not been used up until now should lead to stable and long-term changes.

The pre- and post-coaching design of this research measured a positive, though no significant short-term learning effect from the coaching experiment. Although it is hypothetical, and basis on the theoretical framework of interviewer competences, long-term effects are also expected. However, on the basis of this research it is not possible to state categorically what the effects of the coaching interventions will be in the longer

term. Future longitudinal research, in which interviewer performance of coached interviewers will be evaluated some time after the training has ended, should clarify this aspect.

## 7.4 Training implications & recommendations

### 7.4.1 Deliberate practice

According to both the Five Factor Model and the iceberg model, interviewer behaviour is related to the individual's established personality structure and this makes it difficult to change. For this reason, using deliberate practice in training and retraining of competences is an extremely important component (Ericsson, Krampe & Tesch-Römer, 1993; McCoy, 2006). Deliberate practice involves creating long-term follow-up opportunities for the trainee, with sufficient occasions for repetition under coaching. This is all the more important when training experienced detectives who have had very little feedback about their interview performance in the past, which means that certain skills may have become institutionalised within their own personal interview style.

The research shows the benefits of regularly and adequately practicing new interviewer skills using role-play, expert and/or peer feedback, organising opportunities for supervision. Previous studies have also shown that these techniques are essential for bringing about appropriate changes in police interviewer behaviour. Ericsson et al. (1993) called these educational methods 'deliberate practice techniques'. They claim that these techniques can optimise new behaviour skills. Deliberate practice are methods whereby the trainee, under the supervision of a coach (1) practice a well-defined task, (2) that are challenging yet achievable, (3) with direct feedback on their performance and results, (4) are given the opportunity to correct their mistakes and (5) they can repeat the action until it becomes routine (Ericsson et al., 1993).

Despite the empirically proven advantages, deliberate practices have unfortunately only been used to a limited extent within police training. This is understandable from an organisational point of view given that implementing deliberate practices or coaching in the workplace would substantially increase the intensity of the training, from a financial, organisational and time-intensity point of view. It is particularly the first factor, the financial aspect (in other words the bottom line), that most probably plays a decisive role. We can ask ourselves whether the prevailing, purely theoretically oriented and temporal interviewer training course, as it is taught at the national police academy is the right investment if we consider that behavioural retrieval occurs in the absence of follow-up training. Following up with structured coaching of new and complex skills, such as



investigative interviewing techniques, is therefore strongly advised, all the more when it comes to interviewing of suspects that can have serious and far-reaching consequences for the lives of the suspects in question.

The individual coaching method offers the interviewers the opportunity to practice their interview competences often, at work and in a structured manner, based on their own, real-life, interviewing experience. This procedure could be an ideal and logical follow-up to their initial theoretical training. In light of these research results, evaluating the organisation of the theoretical interviewer course as it is currently taught at the Belgian national police academy is therefore recommended. On the basis of these results, complementing the current training with, for instance, a six-monthly refresher course in groups and/or on an individual basis would be very useful for both the satisfaction levels of the interviewers as well as in terms of individual interviewer behaviour. This would prevent lapses in acquired knowledge and skills and optimise the learning effect of the training.

In the future, internal interviewer coaches could be trained so as to facilitate the individual coaching of colleague interviewers. Using interviewer coaches is a practice that already exists among our neighbours to the north. In the Netherlands, an interviewer coach is an experienced detective who coaches colleague interviewers and gives advice in the preparation, implementation and follow-up of interviews (Amelsvoort, Rispen & Grolman, 2010). With complex and difficult investigative interviewing in mind, this coaching and discussion structure is recommended because:

- (1) Interviewing is one of the most important tasks in police detective work;
- (2) Interviewing is a complex activity that demands to be based on professionalism and undertaken by police officers with self-insight and capable of self-reflection;
- (3) In the coming years, a large part of the know-how that has been built up by experienced police officers (the baby boom generation) may disappear because they will be retiring;
- (4) The fact is that the learning effect of short-term interview training falls away drastically in the absence of follow-up course;
- (5) Coaching can offer an opportunity to conduct interviewing in a secure setting;
- (6) Every organisation strives to work as efficiently as possible and make savings where it can;

- (7) In the future, police training must comply with the Bologna Treaty;
- (8) An improvement in the quality of police interviews, and therefore optimising of interpersonal interview competences, will be necessary due to the presence of a lawyer during investigative interviews as a consequence of the arrest by the European Court of Human Rights, *Salduz versus Turkey*;
- (9) In the future audiovisual recordings of investigative interviews may become obligatory, which leaves the image of the police in the eyes of society in a vulnerable position and so it is all the more important to ensure that interviewer competences are seen to be credible and principled.

Validating these kinds of coaching initiatives implies that the police are ready for a change in mentality vis a vis training. The question is whether police culture, as described so often in the literature, is ready for this. On the basis of this research, we note that the police force is receptive to innovating its training methods and bringing them up to date. But the intensive nature of the deliberate practice principle, and the notion of learning something for life are still underestimated. Moreover, we recognise that if we want to implement learning in the workplace within current police practices it will take more than just the goodwill of the interviewers. The opportunity that was created within the police force to conduct this research in seven police departments is a step in the right direction by the Belgian police as an institution. But this is one small step of many that need to take place, at the level of police management and beyond, if we want to see a bottom up manifestation of practice oriented training of police officers in general, and interviewers in particular.

#### 7.4.2 Voluntariness

As discussed, the criteria of voluntariness - taking part in the coaching experiment of one's own free will - was responsible for the distinction between the response and the non-response group. We assume that this distinction affected receptivity to training of the response group. The majority of the participants chose to voluntarily take part in the study. As a consequence, the sample has a self-selection character, which in turn meant that the participants were extremely motivated and keen to learn more and improve their interviewing skills. It was a pleasure to be able to work with these motivated people.

The resoluteness of the sample was also evident in the relatively small drop out. Only 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the 70 participants (63 interviewers and 7 coaches) were forced or chose to stop participating. Any validation of the coaching methods should take into account that voluntary participation in coaching is therefore advisable. This resolute and motivated dynamic is necessary in terms of instilling self-reflection, the first step towards optimising

individual interviewer behaviour.

This motivation-dynamic could also explain the in-group versus out-group effect that we described in chapter 6. Driven by their determination to improve their interviewing skills, the participants that took part in the group coaching may well have - subconsciously - sparked up a rivalry process with their colleagues undergoing individual training. Consequently, this may explain why the impact of the one-off training was greater than initially expected.

During the coaching experiment, the participants mentioned several times the difference, in term of the complexity, between the federal and local detective services of the files that handled. This difference was not obvious in the interviewing skills of the various officers. Nor were there any major differences in the success of the training of the locally engaged officers compared to their federal colleagues. These observations suggest that a similar difference in the level of the training is not necessary given that there was nothing to differentiate in this regard between the two 'types' of detective departments. The results of this research showed that the coaching and training of interviewers does not need to be organised along the lines of federal versus local.

#### 7.4.3 Interviewing suspects: specialisation or despecialisation?

This dissertation gives the findings of an experimental research project in which the success of two newly developed interview training programmes - an intensive, individual training (long-term coaching with a personal coach) versus a one-day group training session - were investigated empirically. The design, structure and evaluation of these training courses reflected the experimental character of the research.

Too often 'the interview' is spoken of in generic terms. Interviewing is an extremely diverse and complex subject and its form depends on a wide variety of variables that are independent of each other. These include the personalities of the suspect and interviewer, the timing and environment in which the interview takes place, the subject, the severity of the crime and so on. 'The interview', never mind a blue print that encapsulates it, does not exist (De Fruyt, Bockstaele & De Greef, 2006).

Training courses for interviewing, as they are structured and conducted by our neighbours in the UK and the Netherlands, distinguish several levels of interviewing. This stratified structure of one level above another reflects a line of thinking based on the idea that 'an interview' as such does not exist. The departure point is always a general level of interviewing that rests on the minimum qualifications that a good interviewer must have under his belt in order to conduct day-to-day interviews. Those interviewers that

master these skills are permitted to move up a step towards more specialised training. In this way, those that have a knack for interviewing are sifted out from the rest and given special training so that they will guarantee good interview practices in difficult situations, such as interviews with minors, difficult suspects and adult suspects with mental problems or disabilities (Griffiths & Milne, 2005).

This principle of specialisation and making optimum use of the tools at hand is not one that is seen in Belgian investigative interviewing practice or training. In short specialisation is not a principle that applies to the prevailing Belgian policy regarding detective investigations at either a local or a federal level. There is one exception: the special training given to those who interview children. When it comes to investigative interviewing, it is prudent to take more into account than merely the complexity of the crime file.

On the basis of this research, I would like to strongly recommend that those responsible in the Belgian Police Force consider investing in investigative interviewer training. This will entail critically reviewing the current state of interviewing and training of officers, evaluating the state of affairs and possibly reorganising it where necessary. The information that comes to light during police investigative interviewing is of vital importance, not only for the suspects, but for the victims and others involved as well. In short, a good interview is priceless, and given recent and future developments unleashed by the *Salduz* arrest by the European Court of Human Rights, it is time that Belgium further invested in interviewing professionalism.

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## Appendix B

Validity & internal consistency of the PICI

Scale	self T0	self T1	others T1	self T2	others T2
<b>Careful-Tenacious (CT)</b>					
Cronbach's Alpha	.68	.92	.95	.92	.96
% of Variance	51%	64%	79%	64%	79%
CT1	.52	.61	.79	.74	.77
CT2	.44	.68	.81	.74	.85
CT3	.47	.62	.75	.67	.74
CT4	.70	.64	.81	.63	.76
CT5	.43	.61	.86	.47	.83
CT6	.50	.67	.81	.70	.81
CT7	.50	.67	.78	.67	.81
CT8	.52	.63	.67	.50	.73
<b>Controlled-Non-reactive (CN)</b>					
Cronbach's Alpha	.86	.87	.95	.88	.96
% of Variance	52%	54%	75%	57%	79%
CN1	.55	.53	.83	.70	.79
CN2	.63	.65	.84	.73	.80
CN3	.58	.77	.88	.72	.90
CN4	.50	.70	.81	.82	.79
CN5	.59	.42	.71	.42	.73
CN6	.35	.27	.57	.13	.69
CN7	.63	.60	.73	.56	.86
CN8	.31	.36	.63	.45	.75
<b>Dominant-Insisting (DI)</b>					
Cronbach's Alpha	.87	.90	.92	.91	.90
% of Variance	54%	60%	66%	63%	61%
DI1	.56	.48	.76	.60	.65
DI2	.59	.73	.83	.71	.80
DI3	.72	.67	.73	.66	.70
DI4	.60	.64	.83	.69	.80
DI5	.26	.43	.16	.36	.15
DI6	.70	.73	.78	.77	.69
DI7	.45	.65	.60	.62	.57
DI8	.49	.47	.59	.63	.54
<b>Communicative (C)</b>					
Cronbach's Alpha	.83	.91	.94	.86	.94
% of Variance	46%	62%	71%	52%	72%
C1	.37	.59	.85	.57	.78
C2	.51	.78	.67	.53	.78
C3	.53	.60	.84	.64	.76
C4	.53	.67	.63	.48	.60
C5	.65	.68	.63	.62	.70
C6	.47	.64	.80	.65	.84
C7	.24	.42	.63	.21	.62
C8	.43	.63	.65	.48	.70
<b>Benevolent (B)</b>					
Cronbach's Alpha	.82	.89	.97	.90	.97
% of Variance	45%	57%	83%	58%	85%
B1	.42	.53	.80	.57	.88
B2	.56	.70	.85	.68	.84
B3	.64	.67	.84	.67	.90
B4	.56	.57	.85	.57	.90
B5	.64	.59	.86	.55	.84
B6	.38	.56	.85	.65	.85
B7	.28	.60	.79	.51	.82
B8	.12	.34	.78	.49	.76

T0 shows the results of the PICI self-assessments of the interviewers before the T1 and T2 role play performances.

