Introducing a PEACE-compliant 'Structured Interview Protocol' to enhance the quality of investigative interviews

Fiona Gabbert, Lorraine Hope, David La Rooy, Ashleigh McGregor, Rebecca Milne, & Tom Ellis

- Goldsmiths University of London
- University of Portsmouth
- Royal Holloway University of London

Background & Context for Research

- Many advances in effective interview practice
  - Some successes with introductions of new interview tools and techniques into policy/practice
  - Does not always translate into improving basic level interview training

- Frontline response officers
  - Least training
  - Most interviewing
  - Increasingly wearing Body-Worn Video Cameras

Research objectives

1. Examine real-life interview data from frontline officers to identify common challenges and training needs (baseline performance).

2. Work with our practitioner collaborators to develop an evidence-based Structured Interview Protocol & related training, for use by frontline officers and other basic-level investigative interviewers.

3. Test the Structured Interview Protocol under controlled conditions to examine the amount of training required to produce effective results.

4. Test the Structured Interview Protocol training in the field with a randomised controlled trial.

Objective 1: Examining baseline performance

Total N = 94, from four participating UK-based police forces.

Common deviations from best practice and PEACE guidelines –

Engage & Explain phase
- Absence of any rapport building attempts (87/94)
- No attempt to explain expectations of the witness (78/94)

Account phase
- Poor use of hierarchical questioning (open – closed q’s)
- Over-reliance on closed and 5 wh- questions
- Interviewer led structure
- New topic areas introduced with a closed question

Objective 2: Develop a Structured Interview Protocol

- Taking the form of a generic PEACE interview template, also including -
  - New techniques to facilitate ‘engage and explain’ (rapid rapport; empathy; setting threshold of reporting; source-monitoring; encouragement of qualifiers, etc.)
  - New techniques to facilitate retrieval (appropriate use of questions; interviewee-lead interviewing; use of self-generated cues, etc.)
  - Effective training techniques to facilitate retention of learning (psychology of learning, protocol format, use of aide memoirs, etc.)
Objective 3: Field trial

Mock-witness study (N = 65 response officers from 2 forces)
- Pre-SIP training interview with a mock witness.
- SIP training (max. 1 day)
- Post-SIP training interview with a mock witness.

Real-witness field study (N = 216 response officers from 4 forces)
- BWV footage of first accounts/interviews sourced from officers who (a) later received SIP training, (b) did not receive SIP training.
- BWV footage of trained / non-SIP trained officers approx. 1-2 months following the training sessions.

Results:

Feedback

Would you do anything different post SIP training? YES 77%

Results: field interviews
Summary and Future Directions

- The PEACE-compliant SIP package promotes high quality interview performance
  - Increased use of rapid rapport techniques, enhanced 'engage and explain' skills, and an increase in appropriate question types, used in a structured manner.
- Embed as initial training for all new officers (easier than re-training)
- Creates strong base for advanced training
- Potential for additional effective techniques to be added in
- All resources freely available, following peer-review process.

Thank you. Questions welcome.

Acknowledgements:

ESRC (grant no ES/M006395/1)
Ashleigh McGregor  Jana Spakova
Alessandra Caso     Diego Nardi
Alex Lloyd          Eleonora Mancini
Chloe Standen       Eve Twivy

f.gabbert@gold.ac.uk