The effects of a relational mistake and communication error handling in a suspect interview

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I always heard stories about my granddad working for the police when I was little. Not until recently I found out that his role was to give police officers courses on how to optimize communication within the forces. This shows that the idea has been around for years, but after this research it is the time to succeed at it.
Abstract

Relational mistakes in communication by police officers might have a huge impact on a suspect interview. To research how the communication within a suspect interview can be optimal, not only will be looked at the influence that mistakes might have on a suspect, but as well the various ways of error handling. The suspect interview is based on a highly strained relationship: the interviewer and the suspect have high stakes, an officer has mixed motives and there is low trust in an interviewer by the suspect. In order to research mistakes made in this type of relationship, there has been looked at the relationship between a student and an authority of the university. There were 116 psychology students who participated in the experiment. They were asked to imagine that they had conducted exam fraud, after which they were connected with a member of the exam committee via a virtual chat session. This authority then makes a relational mistake or no mistake and tries to recover this mistake via apologizing, denying or accepting the mistake. The research shows that the affective trust in the error maker is significantly lower and the felt hostility was significantly higher after a relational mistake is made, than when no mistake is made. Furthermore was found that apologizing was a better recovery strategy after a relational mistake was made to increase affective trust, than denial and acceptance.
Dutch Abstract

Het maken van relationele fouten in communicatie door politieagenten kan een enorme impact hebben in een verdachte-interview. Om te onderzoeken hoe communicatie binnen een verdachte-interview optimaal kan zijn, zal er niet alleen gekeken worden naar de invloed die fouten kunnen hebben op de verdachte, maar ook naar verschillende manieren om met deze fouten om te gaan. Het verdachte-interview is gebaseerd op een zeer gespannen relatie: De politieagent en de verdachte hebben veel te verliezen, een agent heeft gemixte motieven en er is weinig vertrouwen in de politie. Om het maken van fouten in dit type relatie te onderzoeken, is er in dit onderzoek gekeken naar de relatie tussen student en een autoriteit van de universiteit. Er waren 116 psychologiestudenten die hebben deelgenomen aan dit experiment. Hen was gevraagd om zich in te beelden dat zij tentamenfraude hadden gepleegd, waarna zij verbonden werden met een lid van de examencommissie in een virtuele chatsessie. Deze autoriteit maakt vervolgens een relationele fout of geen fout en probeert dit te herstellen door excuses aan te bieden, de fout te ontkennen of de fout te accepteren. Dit onderzoek laat zien dat affectief vertrouwen in de foutenmaker significant lager is en de gevoelde vijandigheid significant hoger nadat er in relationele fout was gemaakt, ten opzichte van wanneer er geen fout was gemaakt. Daarnaast werd gevonden dat excuses aanbieden een betere herstelstrategie is om affectief vertrouwen toe te doen nemen, nadat een relationele fout is gemaakt, dan de fout te ontkennen of te accepteren.
Research shows the importance of communication in police-civilian interaction:” Five of the six most common actions taken by officers consisted entirely of talking and listening” (Roberg, Novak, & Cordner, 2005, p.30). While communicating, mistakes can be made. Communication mistakes are not problematic in every kind of conversation. However, when such a communication mistake happens in a police-civilian interaction, a small miscommunication can have the potential to escalate into more serious issues. A suspect might for instance consider the sender of these errors, a police officer, as less competent to do his or her job or less trustworthy. This mindset of the suspect can lead to a less effective interview, which could make it more difficult for the interviewer to obtain the information necessary. Trust is considered as an important factor in police-civilian communication. For instance, the fairness heuristic theory argues that trust is a guide for the decision-making in cooperating with authorities, when there is uncertainty about potential exploitation (Lind, 2001). In this research, we examine whether the making of a communication mistake in a suspect interview has an influence on the suspect. A communication mistake by interviewers might hinder them in achieving their goals in the suspect interview. In order to find how the communication within a suspect interview can be optimal, there will be looked at the influence that mistakes might have on a suspect. As well will be looked upon the various ways of error handling, in order to recover the mistake that is made. In this research we define the communication error handling process as follows:

- The sender utters a message;
- The recipients judges this message to contain a mistake;
- The recipient (in)directly addresses this mistake; and
- The sender realizes the mistake and responds to it in a direct or delayed fashion.

A suspect interview setting

The setting of this research is a suspect interview. This is an interview in which there is a suspect, who is accused of something, and an interviewer, who leads the interview. The main aim of a suspect interview is to gain information (Beune, Giebels & Taylor, 2010). There are three important aspects within a suspect interview that can lead to a highly strained relationship that make up the setting of a suspect interview. Firstly, the interviewer has mixed motives within a suspect interview: On the one hand the interviewer wants to find out the truth and gain as much proof as he can and on the other hand he is busy with the fact that further cooperation by the suspect might be needed in the future (Baldwin, 1993; Brodt & Tuchinsky, 2000). These converse attitudes might pressure the relationship. Secondly, there is
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the lack of trust a suspect has in the police. Suspects may for instance show resistance, even when they are not guilty, because they do not trust the police in recognizing their innocence (Sheppard, 1993). Thirdly, suspects do not only question the interviewers competence, but they also often have a lot to lose: there are high stakes for both the interviewer and the suspect. In a suspect interview, there is a high stake for the suspect: punishment. The high stake for the interviewer is the need to obtain information in order for the interview to be useful for an investigation. When one makes mistakes in communicating in this setting, different reactions might occur, which will be described in the following paragraphs.

**Relational mistakes and Trust**

Communication mistakes in a suspect interview might lead to different negative outcomes. A study by Hunter, Tate, Dzieweczynski and Bedell-Avers (2011) makes a distinction between two types of mistakes: task and relational mistakes. Task related mistakes are based on facts, whereas relational mistakes are based on the amount of connection or the lack of connection one can feel within an interaction. In this research there will only be looked at relational mistakes. Examples of relationship errors include errors related to supporting, recognizing and rewarding, mentoring and developing.

It is important that a suspect feels he or she can trust the police in a suspect interview in order to speak the truth. Trust can be defined as confident, positive expectations about the words, actions, and decisions of another in situations entailing risk (Lewicki & Bunker, 1995, p.134). McAllister (1995) makes a distinction within the concept of trust between ‘affect-based trust’ and ‘cognition-based trust’. The first reflects trust based on confidence in emotional investments, the expressions of genuine care and concern and an understanding of reciprocated sentiments by the trustor. The latter reflects a confidence rooted in someone’s credentials and reputation for dependability, reliability and professionalism, which is more task-orientated. Since the relationship within a suspect interview has high stakes for both parties, trusting each other can be beneficial. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) explore this relationship further in their integrative model of trust. They define trust as ‘the willingness of a trustor to be vulnerable to a trustee based on positive expectations about the trustee’s actions‘ (p.712). In the case of the suspect interview, the suspect has to be willing to trust the police based on positive expectations. These positive expectations are captured in three components of ‘trustworthiness’. The first component is based on benevolence, which captures expectations about caring and supportive motives of the trustee and can be linked to affect-based trust. The other two components are ability, which captures expectations about
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compétence and skills of the trustee and integrity, which captures expectations about the
trustor being consistent to sound principles, on which both cognition-based predictions could
be made. When a relational mistake is made, this might decrease benevolence and thereby
lead to less trust in the mistake maker.

H1: The making of a relational mistake in a suspect interview will lead to lower trust
in the mistake maker in comparison to the situation where no error is made.

Hostility

When a relational mistake is made, a suspect might feel less trust towards the mistake
maker because of the lack of support. However, one might also feel somewhat aggravated
towards the mistake maker, when they feel the mistake that is made does them injustice. This
feeling might lead towards a more hostile attitude by the suspect towards the police. Hostility
can be described as an outward-focused negative emotion within communication that occurs
when it is believed that the other person’s role is causing a personal injustice (Tangney &
Dearing, 2002). This negative outward-emotion is focused on blaming the other party for the
situation they are both in. When the other person is not treated with dignity while
communicating, this is called interpersonal injustice (Bies & Moag, 1986; Greenberg, 1993).
Interpersonal justice or injustice is based on interpersonal rules, which are rules on how one
wants to be treated and believes he or she should be treated. These interpersonal rules are
relevant for situations in which a communication partner is expected to be able to show a
sense of reciprocal care and concern. In a context where communication is rude, disrespectful,
or inappropriate one might not be able to conform to interpersonal justice. Rupp and Spencer
(2006) found that when a suspect feels as if he or she is mistreated, this might lead to negative
emotions such as hostility. So, when an interviewer makes a relational mistake during a
suspect interview, it might not only influence the different types of trust as described above,
but might lead to negative outward-focused emotions such as hostility towards the mistake
maker as well.

H2: The making of a relational mistake in a suspect interview will lead to more
hostility towards the mistake maker in comparison to the situation in where no error is made.

Rapport

As described earlier, the relationship within a suspect interview is highly strained. To
make the relationship a sufficient one, it is necessary that there is trust and there are no
negative emotions towards the police. To make this possible, there is need for a positive
relationship. The positive bond within an interaction can be called rapport. It is defined as ‘a sympathetic connection to another’ or ‘an affinity in ecological alignment with another system’ (Newberry & Stubbs, 1990, p. 14). It can be important to strengthen the bond, which can be done via rapport building. The building of rapport is described as the positive bond between interviewer and interviewee. By feeling such a bond, a suspect might feel more trust towards the interviewer and feel more able to open up. Rapport is often researched with child-witnesses. Gurland and Grolnick (2008) found that children perceived less rapport when adult interviewers acted in an atypical manner, for instance playing with a toy, then when they acted in a typical manner. A majority of these studies show that a supportive interviewer increases the accuracy of a child witness report and decreases the amount of incorrect responses to misleading questions compared to a non-supportive interviewer (Quas, Wallin, Papini, Lench, & Scullin, 2005). In the research of Collins, Lincoln and Frank (2002) the effect of rapport in eyewitness recall of adults is studied. They found that interviewees remembered more correct information and the same amount of incorrect information in the rapport condition, as interviewees did in the neutral and abrupt conditions. Rapport might make the interviewee feel more aware and comfortable in a suspect interview. By making a mistake that shows lack of a supporting role, the suspect might feel less comfortable and therefore feel less rapport towards the mistake maker. 

**H3: The making of a relational mistake in a suspect interview will lead to less rapport towards the mistake maker in comparison to the situation in where no error is made.**

**Recovery-strategies**

When a relational mistake is made, it might be possible that this will decrease the trust that is felt, increase the hostility that is felt and decrease the rapport that is felt towards the mistake maker. Since these possible outcomes are not positive for further communication, a response in order to recover might be necessary. It can be seen that the final step of handling a communication error is to realize a mistake is made and respond to it. This responding can be done in various ways. The two most common recovery-strategies when a trust violation is made are denial and apology. Both denial and apology are double edged in nature (Kim, Ferrin, Cooper & Dirks, 2004). Apology is expected to have a beneficial effect on trust because it claims the violation and by apologizing one shows a sincere intent to avoid such violations in the future. Yet, this benefit is counterbalanced by the possibly adverse effect of admitting guilt. A denial, on the other hand, is defined as a statement in which an accusation is explicitly declared to be untrue. Denial is expected to have a positive effect on trust,
because it rejects guilt for the act and therefore may lead the perceiver to give the accused party the benefit of the doubt. Yet, this benefit is counterbalanced by the possibly harmful effect of failing to convey a sincere intent to avoid such violations in the future. A third recovery strategy can be used: Acceptance. We define acceptance as acknowledging one has made a mistake towards the suspect. With this acknowledgement the mistake maker can prevent the occurrence of the same mistake in the future and therefore might gain trust. This might be counterbalanced by the fact that accepting might not always be a clear way of responding. It might be thought of as admitting guilt, but might as well be thought of as less sincere. Tomlinson, Dineen, and Lewicki (2004) argued for apology to be especially effective, because it provides an expression of remorse that may positively influence a perceiver’s belief about the accused party. Other researchers have found that apology may be relatively ineffective since an apology acknowledges guilt and therefore may improve negative consequences of an accusation, saying a response in the way of denying or accepting might be most effective (Schlenker, 1980). The best way of responding can also depend on the kind of mistake that is made. Within a relational mistake a lack of support is shown. This mistake might have an influence on the amount of trust, hostility and rapport that can be found within a suspect interview. The response to the mistake can as well have an influence on any further communication. Since apology might be able to rebuild the belief in the honesty of the mistake maker, it might be able to increase trust, lower any negative-outward emotions of the suspect towards the mistake maker and increase rapport. Therefore apologizing might be the most suitable recovery-strategy in the case of a relational mistake, since the mistake maker herein takes ownership of the violation that is made by the uttered relational mistake.

H4: When a relational error is made in a suspect interview, apology is best in increasing trust, decreasing hostility and increasing rapport, in comparison to denial and acceptance.
Methods

Experimental Design

The experiment had a 1 (communication error: relational) x 3 (recovery-strategies: acceptance, denial and apology) design and a control condition in which no error was made, leading to 4 conditions. For this thesis only a subset of the data was used, which is a part of the PhD research of the first supervisor. The participants took part in the study online. They were told to follow a video depicting a mock scenario of exam fraud. The participants then took part in a virtual interview in which they were told to be connected to a member of the exam-committee of University of Twente. Following this, the member made a relational mistake or no mistake, after which the member applied one of the three recovery-strategies.

Participants

The participants were solely Psychology students of University of Twente, following courses for their first, second or third year of the bachelor programme. One-hundred-nineteen students were included in this research. Three participants had to be deleted before analysing, due to misinterpretation of the communication error that was made. After deleting, the data consisted out of 116 participants (Mean age= 20.7 years, \(SD = 2.29\)). The participants were male (n=30) and female (n=86). Participants were Dutch (n=59), German (n=56) or Flemish (n=1). There were 29 participants assigned to the first condition (relational mistake-denial), 29 to the second (relational mistake-apology), 29 to the third condition (relational mistake-acceptance) and 29 participants were assigned to the control group. In the experiment all participants were aware of the accusation of exam fraud and the chat with the exam committee.

Procedure

The participants took part in the study online. Most participants took part via SONA-Systems. Some of the students were recruited via an Internet-link, which was posted on sites only accessible for psychology students at the University of Twente. To encourage participation students received 0.5 of necessary credits when they participated via SONA-systems. For participation via the Internet-link no rewards were given, merely the motivation to help out a fellow student. When the participants started the question was asked: ‘is it a weekday between 9 am and 5 pm?’ This question made the study more credible: A live chat with a member of the exam committee is only possible when that member is at work.
Following, the participants were asked to pretend they committed exam fraud and they were therefore connected with someone from the exam committee of University of Twente. The video showed the following scenario: “You are a psychology student at the university of Twente, where you participate in a personality research. You walk into the room and take place at the computer. During this research you suddenly see the exam you will soon have to make, lying on the desk. You look around, but the researcher is no longer in the room with you. You decide to look. You read all the questions and put it back into place, before the researcher gets back.” The researcher accuses you of exam fraud, and proves it because the papers edges looked bent, while it was just printed. Now the exam committee wants to hear your side of the story, via video chat. As it was a simulation, because the member is not real, the conversation is continued via a virtual chat. The possibility of a video chat gains credibility for the study, but is not feasible. In the virtual chat first the students name, student number and date of birth are asked. To continue the member asks the following 3 questions: ‘have you been a suspect of exam fraud before?’ ‘Have you committed the fraud of which you are a suspect?’ ‘Can you tell me more about this event?’ After answering this last question the stimuli differs per participant and the experimental manipulation started. After the manipulation the member asked: “do you have anything to add?” and concludes: “Ok, I believe I have enough information. Soon I will contact you again to inform you further about the procedure. Good bye.” In total each participant had to answer 9 questions during the interview, of which the questions asked within the manipulation could vary between 3 options.

**Experimental manipulation**

During the virtual interview the authority makes a relational mistake: “Ok. So you are not a motivated student” or no mistake “Ok. So you were present during the research” towards the participant. After the student has responded the member of the exam committee used one of the three recovery-strategies. The member may excuse his/her self; “Excuse me, I was wrong”, he/she may deny; “I am not wrong” or may accept; “I have written down your answer”. Then a survey was given measuring the dependent variables and some demographic variables (see Appendix 1).

**Dependent variables**

Trust. Affective trustworthiness and cognitive trustworthiness were measured with Colquitt, LePine, Piccolo, Zapata and Rich’s (2012) scales. The items were stated in questions
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about the member of the exam committee and the exam committee in total and were two separate variables. Affect based trust was designed to capture the emotional investment and mutual concern that was felt, for example: “Anne Bruinsma (member-exam committee) and I would both share our ideas and feelings”. The scale consisted of three items with all items using response anchors of 1= totally disagree to 5= totally agree. These items had an alpha coefficient of .72. The cognition based trust items were designed to capture the sense of professionalism and dedication that was felt by the participant, for example: ”Anne Bruinsma approaches his/her job with dedication”. The scale consisted of five items with all items using response anchors of 1= totally disagree to 5= totally agree. These items had an alpha coefficient of .41. Because of low reliability it was decided to not use the variable ‘cognitive trust’ for further analysis.

Hostility. Hostility was measured with Watson and Clarck’s (1994) scale. The items reflected the amount of negative emotions that were felt during the conversation with a member of the exam committee, for example: “I felt angry”. The scale consisted of six items with all items using response anchors of 1= not at all to 5= a lot. These items had an alpha coefficient of .84.

Rapport. Rapport was measured with Vallano and Compo’s (2011) scale. The items reflected the amount of rapport felt towards the member of the exam committee, this was stated as statements and the degree they were right considering the member of the exam-committee, for example: “Friendly”. The scale consisted of nine items with all items using response anchors of 1= not at all to 5= a lot. The scale had an alpha coefficient of .77.
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Results

A correlation analysis is conducted to show the relation between the three dependent variables. Correlation analysis showed that the three variables are related, which can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1.
The means (M) and standard deviation (SD), and correlation found between the three dependent variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Affective Trust</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Hostility</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td>-.34**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Rapport</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td>-.33**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis 1

For the first hypothesis it was expected that affective trust within a suspect interview would be lower after a relational mistake is made, in comparison with making no mistake at all. An independent t-test was conducted to compare the affective trust-scores for the relational mistake and no mistake conditions. A significant difference in scores was found, \( t(114) = -2.65, p = .01 \), showing that affective trust was lower when making a relational mistake (\( M=1.88, SD= 0.74 \)) compared to making no mistake (\( M=2.32, SD=0.89 \)). This supports hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2

For hypothesis 2 it was expected that hostility towards the mistake maker would be higher when a relational mistake is made in comparison with making no mistake at all. An independent t-test was conducted to compare the hostility-scores for the relational mistake and no mistake conditions. The means show hostility to be higher when making a relational mistake (\( M=2.59, SD= 0.83 \)) compared to making no mistake (\( M=2.41, SD=0.82 \)). This difference showed to be not significant \( t(114) = 1.03, p = .31 \). Since the difference was not significant, the hypothesis is not supported even though the found means do support hypothesis 2.
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**Hypothesis 3**

For the third hypothesis it was expected that rapport within a suspect interview would be lower after a relational mistake is made, in comparison with making no mistake at all. An independent t-test was conducted to compare the rapport-scores for the relational mistake and no mistake conditions. A significant difference in scores was found, \( t(67.06) = -3.26, p = .002 \). Showing that rapport was lower when making a relational mistake \( (M=2.79, SD= 0.54) \) compared to making no mistake \( (M=3.09, SD=0.39) \). This supports hypothesis 3.

**Hypothesis 4**

Finally, for hypothesis 4 it was expected that apology would be the best recovery-strategy when a relational is made, in comparison to denial and acceptance. A one-way ANOVA between groups was used in order to explore the impact of the three recovery-strategies when a relational mistake is made on the three dependent variables affective trust, hostility and rapport. There was a statistically significant difference at \( p< .05 \) level in scores of affective trust \( [F(2, 84) = 3.98, p= .02] \) and hostility \( [F(2, 84) =3.28, p= .04] \). For rapport no significant difference was found. In the post-hoc Bonferroni analysis only for affective trust a significant mean difference at 0.05 level was found. This was found between relational-apologize and relational-denial \( [\text{mean difference (I-J)}= .51, p= .02] \). In Table 2 can be seen that apology does have a higher score in affective trust \( (M= 2.09) \), in comparison to denial \( (M=1.59) \), which partly supports hypothesis 4.

**Table 2.**  
Mean values for the three recovery-strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variables</th>
<th>Denial</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
<th>Apology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affective Trust</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostility</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>2.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapport</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>2.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Pattern of means for recovery-strategies
Discussion

It is important to research the effect of making a relational mistake in the setting of a suspect interview. Equally important is to research how the making of such a mistake can best be recovered. A communication mistake by an interviewer during a suspect interview can have negative effects for the progress of information gathering. In order to optimize the suspect interview, there is looked at what these outcomes might be and what can be the best way to handle the making of an error during a suspect interview. After analysing, there can be stated that we can (partly) support three out of four hypothesis.

First is shown, that affective trust is lower when a relational mistake is made than when no mistake is made. This means that making a relational mistake leads to lower trust. Especially the fact that there was a significant difference found with affective trust seems logical, since McAllister (1995) states that affective trust measures benevolence, which can be linked to relational communication. The hypothesis that trust in general will be lower after the making of a relational mistake was not tested, after it was found that the instrument which measured cognitive trust showed a low reliability. This leads to the first limitation of the study.

The instrument of cognitive trust did not have a high enough reliability to use this in the analysis of the first hypothesis. An explanation for this low reliability can be that the instrument consisted of five items, which were asked in different parts of the questionnaire (Appendix 1). This separation might have led to the misunderstanding of the questions by some of the participants. They might have looked like questions belonging to a different subject, because two of these questions did not ask about the member, but about the total exam committee. The participants might therefore not all answer the questions in the same way, leading to the low reliability that was found for this instrument.

The third hypothesis was supported as well, meaning that the making of a relational mistake indeed leads to a lower rapport in comparison to the situation where no mistake is made. The fact that rapport decreased after a relational mistake is made, is supported by the argument of Quas et al. (2005) that a supportive interviewer leads to more accurate responses and decreases faulty responses. After the relational mistake was made, the participants did not feel like the authority was able to support them.

The second hypothesis was not supported, since there was no significant difference in hostility that was felt when a relational mistake was made in comparison to when no mistake was made. When there was looked at the means that were found with the analysis of hostility,
a slight difference was found in benefit of supporting the hypothesis. The lack of significant support for this hypothesis might have something to do with the instrument that was used and how it was understood.

The second limitation of the study is in the fact that hostility was not found to be significant. This might be rooted in the misunderstanding of the questions measuring hostility. Participants were asked to answer to what extent they experienced negative feelings during the chat with the authority. The feelings that were stated were strong worded. It might very well be that the participant indeed felt hostility towards the member of the exam committee, but had not such strong negative feelings. Furthermore, participants might feel impressed with the authority and therefore feel it is less appropriate to show hostility. Showing lack in trust and rapport might feel less like a personal attack towards the authority then showing hostility.

Finally, the fourth hypothesis was partly supported after analyzing. A significant difference between the three recovery strategies was found within affective trust and hostility. In Table 2, as well as in Figure 1, the differences between the found means can be seen. This shows that in order to decrease hostility after a relational mistake is made denial is the most effective recovery-strategy. It also shows that in order to increase affective trust after a relational mistake is made, apology is the most effective recovery-strategy. In the hypothesis was stated that apology would be better at increasing rapport and affective trust and decreasing hostility, than denial and acceptance. This was partly supported after a post-hoc analysis was conducted. This showed that in affective trust, apology was indeed a significantly better strategy in responding to a relational mistake than both denial and acceptance. Tomlinson, Dineen, and Lewicki (2004) argued for apology to be an effective way of error handling, because it provides an expression of remorse that may lead to positively influence a perceiver’s belief about the accused party. That apology is significantly better within affective trust can be perceived as logical, since this kind of trust is based on the belief that the other will show an understanding of reciprocated sentiments.

The fact that this hypothesis was only partly supported might be due to the way the various recovery strategies were presented. Some participants brought to attention that they felt the interview was computer programmed, at the point they received one of the recovery-strategies. They sometimes felt a discrepancy with the reaction they expected and the reaction they received. When the reaction would have been more natural or fitting to the mistake, apology might have turned out to be a significantly better recovery-strategy within hostility and rapport as well.
Which leads to the last limitation that was found, which was brought to attention by participants as well. Participants stated they might have answered differently when the chat would indeed have been live. In the beginning of the research it is said that a live video chat will start, but then it is shown that video-chat does not work and the interview will be continued via chat. When it really would have been a video chat, they would have felt as if the authority might actually be real and therefore be more concerned when a mistake was made (cf. Beune, Giebels & Sanders, 2009). Roger & Schumacher (1983) also argue that the stakes for both parties in a “real” suspect interview setting are higher than in the simulation, leading to a different interaction process. As the setting is more realistic, it might lead to more transferable outcomes. On the other hand, it may make the setting more vulnerable to bias.

The setting we have chosen in this research is very parsimonious; there are not many other variables that are available to influence the outcomes of the research. If we had chosen for a face to face setting, outcomes might not only have been based on the relational communication mistake that was made and the chosen recovery-strategy, but might for instance, as well be influenced by the way the room looked or whether or not the interviewer was male or female. These external variables were in this research not able to obscure the experiment, but might make it less transferable to real life settings. A follow-up study should examine to what extent our findings also transfer to face-to-face and real-life settings.

This study showed that the making of a relational communication mistake by an authority indeed influences the suspect in terms of trust and rapport. Also, our findings show that it is helpful for an authority to show remorse when a mistake is made. The outcomes suggest that change might be needed in the current method of suspect interviewing. They should not only focus on the making or the preventing of a communication mistake, but as well the best way to repair that mistake in that specific situation. Beune et al. (2010) already found the importance of communication and the aim of information gathering in a suspect interview. The aim might as well have to be using the most effective way of communication and communication error handling in order to get the truth. To be certain if these findings are transferable to change the method of interviewing by the police for the better, follow up experiments should be performed, in which the same type of mistakes and error handling are used in an actual suspect interview. When that research shows the same outcomes, a focus on communication error handling should be implemented in the method of a suspect interview.
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Appendix 1 - The Questionnaire

Inhoud

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Block 1: Introductie

1 Introductie

Fijn dat je mee wilt werken aan het onderzoek: Afkijken: ben jij te pakken? Dit onderzoek gaat over afkijken bij een tentamen op de Universiteit Twente. Afkijken bij een tentamen valt onder de noemer ‘tentamenfraude’ en is het opzettelijk beïnvloeden van het tentamenproces met als doel een ander resultaat uit het tentamen te verkrijgen. Tentamenfraude op de UT kent de volgende sancties (Regels en Richtlijn, art. 3.19 lid 5):
- Uitsluiting van één tentamen met in kennisstelling van de examencommissie;
- Hoogstens één jaar uitsluiting van deelname aan alle tentamens; of
- Beëindiging van inschrijving voor de opleiding.

In dit online onderzoek willen wij te weten komen hoe jij om zal gaan met de situatie waarin jij verdacht wordt van tentamenfraude. We vragen je aan het begin om je in te leven in een fictief scenario waarbij we gebruik maken van een filmpje. Daarna zal er contact worden opgenomen met een lid van de examencommissie. Deze zal over de verdenking een aantal vragen stellen. Tot slot, zullen we je vragen nog wat meer algemene vragen te beantwoorden.

Het onderzoek zal ongeveer 30 minuten in beslag nemen en er kan alleen worden deelgenomen op werkdagen tussen 08.00-17.00 uur in verband met het directe contact met een lid van de examencommissie van de UT. Het onderzoek is onderdeel van het promotieonderzoek van Miriam Oostinga. Zij wordt hierin begeleid door prof.dr. Ellen Giebels en prof.dr. Paul Taylor en voert dit onderzoek uit in samenwerking met bachelorstudent Angelique Haghuis.
Block 2: Informed consent

1 Informed consent

‘Ik verklaar hierbij op voor mij duidelijke wijze te zijn ingelicht over de aard en methode van het onderzoek, zoals uiteengezet in de voorgaande uitleg. Mijn vragen zijn naar tevredenheid beantwoord. Ik stem geheel vrijwillig in met deelname aan dit onderzoek. Ik behoud daarbij het recht deze instemming weer in te trekken zonder dat ik daarvoor een reden hoef op te geven en besef dat ik op elk moment mag stoppen met het experiment. Indien mijn onderzoeksresultaten gebruikt zullen worden in wetenschappelijke publicaties, dan wel op een andere manier openbaar worden gemaakt, zal dit volledig geanonimiseerd gebeuren. Mijn persoonsgegevens zullen niet door derden worden ingezien zonder mijn uitdrukkelijke toestemming. Als ik nog verdere informatie over het onderzoek zou willen krijgen, nu of in de toekomst, kan ik me wenden tot Miriam Oostinga, m.s.d.oostinga@utwente.nl.’

Voor eventuele klachten over dit onderzoek kunt u zich wenden tot de secretaris van de Commissie Ethiek van de faculteit Gedragswetenschappen van de Universiteit Twente, mevr. J. Rademaker (telefoon: 053-4894591; e-mail:j.rademaker@utwente.nl, Postbus 217, 7500 AE Enschede). Aldus in tweevoud getekend:

2 Handtekening student (kopieer onderstaande tekst)

..............................

3 ‘Ik heb toelichting verstrekt op het onderzoek. Ik verklaar mij bereid nog opkomende vragen over het onderzoek naar vermogen te beantwoorden.’

Miriam Oostinga
Block 3: Scenario

1 Scenario

We willen je vragen om je in te leven in de volgende situatie:


2 Video http://youtu.be/cB7Qgg2- _UU

Volgende pagina

3 Stel je het volgende vervolgsscenario voor. Nu is het een week later..

De onderzoekster heeft je beschuldigd van tentamenfraude en is naar de examencommissie gestapt. Zij stelt dat ze kan bewijzen dat jij in het tentamen hebt gekeken, omdat de zijkanten van het stencil zijn omgebogen terwijl het net geprint was. De examencommissie heeft deze beschuldiging genoteerd, maar is benieuwd naar jouw kant van het verhaal. Aangezien de commissie het nogal druk heeft, zal een lid van de examencommissie via een videosessie met je spreken. Dit is de eerste keer dat je van een dergelijk delict verdacht wordt.
Block 4: Examencommissie
1 Examencommissie

We willen graag weten hoe jij reageert wanneer je verdacht wordt van fraude en het daadwerkelijk gedaan hebt. Je hebt er geen belang bij om toe te geven, omdat dit tot uitsluiting van het tentamen of zelfs de opleiding kan leiden. We zullen je nu doorverbinden met de examencommissie. Deze zal je een aantal vragen stellen om te beoordelen of je de waarheid spreekt en of je al dan niet een straf dient te ontvangen. Om de anonimiteit van de deelnemers te waarborgen, heeft iedereen een willekeurig nummer gekregen.

Jouw nummer is 150

Het kan enkele minuten duren voordat we contact hebben gemaakt met een lid van de examencommissie.

2 Plaatje draaiende cirkel.
3 Tijd gespendeerd op deze pagina.
Block 5: Deel 1 interview

1 Helaas is het niet gelukt om videocontact met de examencommissie te maken. Daarom zullen jullie enkel via de chat met elkaar kunnen praten. Anne Bruinsma stuurt je het volgende bericht:

Beste student,
Zojuist heb ik te horen gekregen dat je beschuldigd wordt van tentamenfraude. Graag zou ik jouw verhaal willen aanhoren. Binnenkort heb ik een maandelijkse overleg met de examencommissie en hierin zou ik het meteen willen meenemen. Voordat we hier aan beginnen, zou ik wat algemene informatie van je willen noteren. Wat is je naam, studentnummer en geboortedatum?

Tijd

2 Vul hieronder het antwoord in.

...  

Volgende pagina:

3 Respondent 150 zegt: Kopie bericht student

Tijd

4 Anne Bruinsma is aan het typen...

5 Tijd gespendeerd op deze pagina.

Volgende pagina:

6 Anne Bruinsma heeft het volgende bericht gestuurd:

Ben je wel eens eerder verdacht van het plegen van tentamenfraude?

Tijd

7 Vul hieronder het antwoord in.

...

Volgende pagina:
The effects of a relational mistake and communication error handling in a suspect interview

8 Respondent 150 zegt: Kopie bericht student

9 Anne Bruinsma is aan het typen...

10 Tijd gespendeerd op deze pagina.

Volgende pagina:

11 Anne Bruinsma heeft het volgende bericht gestuurd:

   Heb je de fraude gepleegd waarvan je wordt beschuldigd?

12 Vul hieronder het antwoord in.

   ...

Volgende pagina:

13 Respondent 150 zegt: Kopie bericht student

14 Anne Bruinsma is aan het typen...

15 Tijd gespendeerd op deze pagina.

Volgende pagina:

16 Anne Bruinsma heeft het volgende bericht gestuurd:

   Kun je daar nog wat meer over vertellen?

17 Vul hieronder het antwoord in.

Volgende pagina:

18 Respondent 150 zegt: Kopie bericht student

19 Anne Bruinsma is aan het typen...

20 Tijd gespendeerd op deze pagina.
The effects of a relational mistake and communication error handling in a suspect interview

Block 6-13: Deel 2.1-2.8 manipulatie

Volgende pagina:
1 Anne Bruinsma heeft het volgende bericht gestuurd:
   a. FEIT: Ok. Dus je bent een student Sociologie.
   b. REL: Ok. Dus je bent een niet gemotiveerde student.
   c. GEEN: Ok. Dus je was aanwezig bij het onderzoek.
   Tijd

2 Vul hieronder het antwoord in.
   ...  

Volgende pagina:
3 Respondent 150 zegt: Kopie bericht student
   Tijd

4 Anne Bruinsma is aan het typen...

5 Tijd gespendeerd op deze pagina.

Volgende pagina:
6 Anne Bruinsma heeft het volgende bericht gestuurd:
   a. EXC: Ik heb het verkeerd, excuus.
   b. ONTK: Ik heb het niet verkeerd.
   c. GEEN: Ik heb alles genoteerd.
   Tijd

7 Vul hieronder het antwoord in.
   ...

Volgende pagina:
8 Respondent 150 zegt: Kopie bericht student
  Tijd

9 Anne Bruinsma is aan het typen...

10 Tijd gespendeerd op deze pagina.

Volgende pagina:
11 Anne Bruinsma heeft het volgende bericht gestuurd:
The effects of a relational mistake and communication error handling in a suspect interview

We moeten bijna gaan afronden. Heb je hier nog iets aan toe te voegen?

12 Vul hieronder het antwoord in.

...  

13 Respondent 150 zegt: Kopie bericht student

14 Anne Bruinsma is aan het typen...

15 Tijd gespendeerd op deze pagina.

16 Anne Bruinsma heeft het volgende bericht gestuurd:

Ok. Ik denk dat ik voldoende informatie heb. Ik neem binnenkort opnieuw contact met je op om je verder te informeren over de procedure. Tot ziens.

17 Vul hieronder het antwoord in.

...  

18 Respondent 150 zegt: Kopie bericht student

19 Tijd gespendeerd op deze pagina.

20 Bericht van de onderzoeker:

Bedankt voor het beantwoorden van de vragen. Jullie gaan nou automatisch verder met het invullen van de vragenlijst.

21 Tijd gespendeerd op deze pagina.
Block 14: Vragen na het gesprek

1 Vragen na het gesprek

Je hebt zojuist gesproken met Anne Bruinsma van de examencommissie. We willen graag weten hoe jij over hem/haar denkt en hoe jij het gesprek vond gaan.

Allereerst willen we jou vragen het vakje aan te kruisen bij het plaatje dat tijdens het gesprek volgens jou het beste je eigen positie ten opzichte van de ander weergeeft. Hoe nabij of ver weg zie je jezelf en de ander?

---

Diagrammetje met mogelijke antwoorden:

1. Ik
2. Ande
3. Ik en Ande
4. Ik en Ande
5. Ik en Ande
2 We willen jou vragen het vakje aan te kruisen bij het plaatje dat **tijdens het gesprek** volgens jou het beste je eigen machtpositie ten opzichte van de ander weergeeft. Met betrekking tot macht, in hoeverre voel je je boven, gelijk of onder de ander?
### Block 15: Vragen over gevoelens


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Helemaal niet</th>
<th>Niet</th>
<th>Neutraal</th>
<th>Veel</th>
<th>Erg veel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>voelde ik mij boos (NA)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>was ik vijandelijk (NA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>was ik geïrriteerd (NA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>voelde ik minachting (NA)</td>
<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>voelde ik walging (NA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>voelde ik verafschuwing (NA)</td>
<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>was ik gemotiveerd (ctr)</td>
<td>O</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The effects of a relational mistake and communication error handling in a suspect interview

Block 16: Vragen over lid examencommissie

1 Vragen over lid van de examencommissie

De volgende vragen gaan over Anne Bruinsma. Hoe goed passen de volgende uitspraken bij Anne Bruinsma? *(rapport = R met interviewer; Vallano et al., 2011)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Helemaal niet</th>
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<th>Neutraal</th>
<th>Erg</th>
<th>Heel erg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>O</td>
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<tr>
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<td>O</td>
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<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actief (R)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positief (R)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vlot (R)</td>
<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verveelt (R)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tevreden (R)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongemakkelijk (R)</td>
<td>O</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Beoordeel je Anne Bruinsma als betrouwbaar? En waarom?

...

3 Beoordeel je Anne Bruinsma als competent? En waarom?

...

Volgende pagina

4 De volgende uitspraken gaan over Anne Bruinsma. Geef aan in hoeverre jij het met de volgende uitspraken eens bent. *(IP = information provision – Beune et al., 2011, AT = affective trustworthiness, CT = cognitive trustworthiness - McCallister et al., 2005; Colquitt et al., 2012)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Helemaal mee oneens</th>
<th>Beetje mee oneens</th>
<th>Neutraal</th>
<th>Beetje eens</th>
<th>Helemaal mee eens</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aan Anne Bruinsma zou ik alles vertellen (IP1)</td>
<td>O</td>
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<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aan Anne Bruinsma zou ik veel informatie geven (IP2)</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aan Anne Bruinsma zou</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ik geneigd zijn de waarheid te vertellen (IP3)

Anne Bruinsma en ik zouden beiden onze ideeën en gevoelens delen (AT1)

Ik zou vrij kunnen praten over mijn problemen met Anne Bruinsma (AT2)

Als ik mijn problemen met Anne Bruinsma zou delen, zou deze constructief en betrokken reageren (AT3)

Anne Bruinsma is betrokken bij zijn/haar baan (CT1)

Ik zie geen reden waarom ik de competentie van Anne Bruinsma in twijfel moet trekken (CT2)

Als mensen meer van Anne Bruinsma zouden weten, zouden ze eerder geneigd zijn zijn/haar functioneren te monitoren (CT3)

Anne Bruinsma neemt verantwoordelijkheid

Anne Bruinsma schaamt zich

Anne Bruinsma voelt zich schuldig

5 De volgende vragen gaan over de examencommissie in het algemeen. Geef aan in hoeverre jij het met de volgende uitspraken eens bent.
De meeste mensen respecteren leden van de examencommissie (CT5)  
Mijn medestudenten beoordelen leden van de examencommissie als betrouwbaar (CT5)
The effects of a relational mistake and communication error handling in a suspect interview

Block 17-22: Communicatiefouten

1. We willen graag nog wat specifiekere vragen stellen over hetgeen gezegd is tijdens het gesprek. Wat vind je goed aan wat Anne Bruinsma zei?

2. Wat zou je Anne Bruinsma adviseren een volgende keer niet te zeggen?

3. Anne Bruinsma zei tijdens dit gesprek ‘Ok. Dus je bent een student sociologie’ OF ‘Ok. Dus je bent een niet gemotiveerde student’ OF ‘Ok. Dus je was aanwezig bij dit onderzoek.’ OF ‘Ik heb het verkeerd, excuus’ OF ‘Ik heb het niet verkeerd.’ OF ‘Ik heb het genoteerd’. Wat vind je hiervan?

4. GEEN herstel > dan: De volgende vragen gaan over de opmerking ‘Ok. Dus je bent een student sociologie’ OF ‘Ok. Dus je bent een niet gemotiveerde student’ OF ‘Ok. Dus je was aanwezig bij dit onderzoek’. Deze opmerking was…(CF = controllability of failure; SE = severity of failure; Hess et al., 2003)

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<th>Beetje mee oneens</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
The effects of a relational mistake and communication error handling in a suspect interview

4 WEL herstel > dan: De volgende vragen gaan over de opmerking ‘Ik heb het verkeerd, excuus’ OF ‘Ik heb het niet verkeerd’ OF ‘Ik heb het genoteerd’. Deze opmerking was.. (SF = satisfaction; Oliver et al., 1989)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tbody>
</table>
Block 23: Demografische kenmerken

1 **Tot slot**
   Graag willen we je nog wat vragen stellen over jezelf.

2 Hoe oud ben je?
   .. jaar

3 Wat is je geslacht?
   Man
   Vrouw

4 Welke nationaliteit heb je?
   Nederlands
   Duits
   Anders, namelijk

5 Welk jaar van de opleiding zit je?
   Eerste bachelorjaar
   Tweede bachelorjaar
   Derde bachelorjaar
   Master
Block 24: Check survey

1 Ten slotte willen we je nog een aantal vragen stellen over de deelname aan deze studie. We verzoeken je om deze vragen zo eerlijk mogelijk te beantwoorden, omdat dit ons helpt de waarde van dit onderzoek beter in te schatten.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Helemaal mee oneens</th>
<th>Beetje mee oneens</th>
<th>Neutraal</th>
<th>Beetje eens</th>
<th>Helemaal mee eens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ik kon me goed inleven in de tentamenfraude die in dit onderzoek gepleegd werd</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ik kan me voorstellen dat ik een vergelijkbare situatie op de Universiteit Twente zou meemaken</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ik denk niet dat de tentamenfraude zou kunnen gebeuren in het echte leven</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Heb je het filmpje dat bij het scenario hoorde, bekeken?
   Ja
   Nee

3 Hoe zorgvuldig heb je de vragen gelezen?
   Zeer onzorgvuldig | O O O O O O O O O | Zeer zorgvuldig

4 Hoeveel energie heb je in het inleven van het scenario gestopt?
   Zeer weinig | O O O O O O O O O | Zeer veel

5 Werd je tijdens het invullen van deze vragenlijst afgeleid? Geef hieronder a.j.b. aan welke afleidingen van toepassing waren.
   O Geen afleiding
   O Het lezen van E-mail
   O Bezoek van een Sociale Media website
   O Bezoek van een andere website
   O Telefoon gecheckt en/of beantwoord
   O Televisie stond op de achtergrond aan
   O Muziek stond op de achtergrond aan
   O Gestoord door een andere persoon
   O Er was een andere afleiding die hier niet bij staat
(Optioneel) We zouden het waarderen als je nog feedback hebt over deze studie. Als je een reactie wilt geven over het onderwerp van de studie, de studie zelf, of het scenario kun je dat hieronder doen.

...
Block 25: Credits

1 Credits

Hartelijk bedankt voor je deelname! Vergeet niet onderstaande vragen nog even in te vullen om jouw credits te ontvangen.

Vul hier je SONA-registratienummer in. Anders kunnen we je geen punten geven voor het invullen van de vragenlijst! N.b. je proefpersoon nummer van SONA en dus niet je studentnummer.

…
The effects of a relational mistake and communication error handling in a suspect interview

Block 26: Debriefing

1 Debriefing

Vul hieronder je emailadres in zodat we je, zodra de dataverzameling afgerond is, een email kunnen sturen met extra informatie over het onderzoek. We zullen jouw emailadres alleen hiervoor gebruiken!

…

2 Aangezien de dataverzameling van dit onderzoek nog niet is afgerond willen we je vragen niet met andere studenten over dit onderzoek te praten.

Wanneer je op ‘verder’ klikt worden je antwoorden opgeslagen en is de vragenlijst afgerond.