

ELICITING INFORMATION IN INTELLIGENCE INTERVIEWS THROUGH PRIMING

An examination of underlying mechanisms

David Amon Neequaye

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Avhandlingen för avläggande av filosofie doktorsexamen i psykologi, som med vederbörligt tillstånd av samhällsvetenskapliga fakultetsstyrelsen vid Göteborgs universitet kommer att offentliggöras fredagen den 2 November 2018, klockan 10 i sal F1, Psykologiska institutionen, Haraldsgatan 1, Göteborg.

Fakultetsopponent: Professor Paul Taylor, Department of Psychology, Lancaster University, United Kingdom

This thesis is based on the following three studies, which are referred to by their Roman numerals:

- I. Neequaye, D. A., Ask, K., Granhag, P. A., & Vrij, A. (2018). *Priming Prosocial Behavior: An Examination of Underlying Mechanisms*. Manuscript.
- II. Neequaye, D. A., Ask, K., Granhag, P. A., & Vrij, A. (in press). Eliciting Information in Intelligence Contexts: The Joint Influence of Helpfulness Priming and Interview Style. *Investigative Interviewing – Research and Practice Journal*
- III. Neequaye, D. A., Ask, K., Granhag, P. A., & Vrij, A. (in press). Facilitating Information Gathering in Intelligence Contexts: The Joint Influence of Helpfulness Priming and a helpfulness-focused interpersonal approach. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*.



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

Neequaye, D. A. (2018). *Eliciting information in intelligence interviews through priming: An examination of underlying mechanisms*. Department of Psychology, University of Gothenburg. P. O. Box 500 +46(0)3178655975, Email: david.neequaye@psy.gu.se

Study I investigated the theoretical proposition that behavioral assimilation to helpfulness priming occurs because a helpfulness prime increases cognitive accessibility to helpfulness-related content, which in turn mediates the impact of the prime on helping behavior (Experiments 1, 2, and 3). In addition, Experiments 1 and 3 investigated the role of the potential moderators, perspective taking and suitability affordances, respectively. The results indicated that helpfulness priming reliably increases helpfulness accessibility. However, no main effects of priming on behavior, nor interactions between priming and any of the moderators, emerged. Mediation analyses results were consistent with the hypothesis that helpfulness priming indirectly increases helping behavior by heightening helpfulness accessibility, but only in two of the five experiments, where participants subjectively perceived more suitable or relevant affordance to enact helpfulness. Taken together, the results of Study I suggested that variability in helpfulness accessibility and suitable affordances may promote the enactment of helping behavior. These findings were extended to an intelligence interview context (Study II and Study III) to explore the underlying mechanisms that engender the potential influence of helpfulness priming on information disclosure. Participants assumed the role of an informant with information about an upcoming mock terror attack. Subsequently, an interviewer solicited information about the attack using an interview style that displayed either high (helpfulness-focused) or low (control) fit with helpfulness. Before the interview, in a seemingly unrelated experiment, half of the participants were primed with helpfulness-related content and the other half were not primed. After the priming, the cognitive helpfulness accessibility of all the participants was assessed. **Study II** explored the proposition that a helpfulness-focused interview style, which draws on interviewees' primed helpfulness accessibility, would function as a high-suitability affordance and thus promote disclosure. Unexpectedly, the results revealed that the helpfulness-focused interview style decreased disclosure when helpfulness accessibility was low. **Study III**, which drew on the findings of Study II, examined the theoretical proposition that consistency between interviewees' primed helpfulness dispositions and an interviewer's (helpfulness-focused) interpersonal approach when soliciting information would facilitate disclosure. Providing some support for the proposition, the results indicated that helpfulness priming increased disclosure when the helpfulness-focused approach was used but not when the control approach was used.

Keywords: disclosure, helpfulness, human intelligence gathering, investigative interviewing, priming