



How an interviewee knows what information is key to disclose or withhold

A recommendation by **Zoltan Dienes**  based on peer reviews by 1 anonymous reviewer of the STAGE 2 REPORT:

David A. Neequaye & Alexandra Lorson (2023) How Intelligence Interviewees Mentally Identify Relevant Information. PsyArXiv, ver. 10, peer-reviewed and recommended by Peer Community in Registered Reports. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/bpdn2>

Submitted: 24 May 2023, Recommended: 09 July 2023

Cite this recommendation as:

Dienes, Z. (2023) How an interviewee knows what information is key to disclose or withhold. *Peer Community in Registered Reports*, 100476. [10.24072/pci.rr.100476](https://doi.org/10.24072/pci.rr.100476)

Published: 09 July 2023

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Research on interviewing has often focused on topics (such as aiding memory of witnesses) which presume the interviewee has already correctly identified the precise information that the interviewer is really after. But how does an informant know what sort of information is asked for, a precondition for an informant to then choose to provide the information or withhold it (depending on their own interests)?

In this study, Neequaye and Lorson (2023) asked subjects to take the role of an informant about a criminal gang, with the further instructions to be cooperative or resistant in helping the interviewer obtain the information they want. In one study, the participants were asked merely to identify what information the interviewer wants. In the second study, the participants answered the interviewer's questions, disclosing whatever information they felt best suited their interest. Crucially, the level of detail of the questions was manipulated, such that the question specified a clear objective or not. Contrary to the theory, mental designation preferences indicated that interviewees generally assume interviewers wanted to know complete details, irrespective of question specificity.

The Stage 2 manuscript was evaluated over one round of in-depth review. Based on responses to the comments, the recommender judged that the manuscript met the Stage 2 criteria and therefore awarded a positive recommendation. **URL to the preregistered Stage 1 protocol:** <https://osf.io/82qtn> **Level of bias control achieved:** Level 6. *No part of the data or evidence that was used to answer the research question was generated until after IPA.* **List of eligible PCI RR-friendly journals:**

- [Peer Community Journal](#)
- [PeerJ](#)
- [Royal Society Open Science](#)

- [Swiss Psychology Open](#)

References:

1. Neequaye, D. A., & Lorson, A. (2023). How Intelligence Interviewees Mentally Identify Relevant Information [Stage 2]. Acceptance of of Version 10 by Peer Community in Registered Reports. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/bpdn2>

Reviews

Evaluation round #1

DOI or URL of the preprint: <https://psyarxiv.com/bpdn2>

Version of the preprint: Version 8

Authors' reply, 06 July 2023

Dear Zoltan,

Many thanks for inviting us to consider the suggestion to expand on the discussion of the captioned Stage 2 registered report. We do appreciate the reviewer's comment to discuss practical implications. While acknowledging the focus on methodology and future research, we believe the entire discussion circles practical implications. For example, we discuss the practical issue that disposition had a stronger influence on interviewees' disclosure than when reasoning about what the interviewer wants to know. But contrary to our expectations, mental designation preferences indicated that interviewees generally assume interviewers want to know complete details, irrespective of question specificity. We also talk about how questions with greater specificity (i.e., high- versus low-worthwhileness questions) may increase the confidence in what the interviewer wants to know. And we speculate that the confidence high-worthwhileness questions bring might serve two ends. They might facilitate disclosure when interviewees elect to be cooperative. But high-worthwhileness questions might impede disclosure or even assist in deception, given that such questions make interviewees confident in their perception of what the interviewer wants to know. And resistant interviewees are inclined to refrain from assisting their interviewer. Overall, our aim was to tell practitioners what to expect not what to do (the latter is not our expertise), which is not typically how researchers frame practical implications. We believe the manuscript is already lengthy and additions will be antithetical to simplifying the prose.

One minor edit to note: we edited the Abstract to reduce the word length in preparation for publication.

Finally, we would like to make the report public. It is set to private on PCI.

Sincerely,

Authors.

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Decision by [Zoltan Dienes](#) , posted 03 July 2023, validated 03 July 2023

minor revision

I have received comments from one of the Stage 1 reviewers. Note that the introduction nor planned analyses sections should not be changed. But consider their suggestion concerning the discussion.

best

Zoltan

Reviewed by anonymous reviewer 1, 30 June 2023

Overall, very thorough paper. The authors put much thought into this study, inclusive of its design and analysis. I have only a couple of comments:

- I suggest that the authors greatly condense the planned analysis portion of the paper, keeping it to only the essentials. They might consider referring readers to the complete plan on OSF.
- I believe that the Introduction can be more succinct, which would enhance readability.
- Given the applied nature of the research question at hand, I would like to see the authors expand their discussion of the implications that their findings have in the context of intelligence gathering. They do this to some extent in the Introduction (i.e., contextualizing it with the cognitive interview), but barely discuss the practical implications in the Discussion.