

Institution: Goldsmiths, University of London		
Unit of Assessment: 4. Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience		
Title of case study: Self-administered investigative techniques: Changing policy and practice for securing evidence and intelligence gathering		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Fiona Gabbert	Professor of Psychology	2013 – present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014-2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact <p>Securing reliable evidence and intelligence is critical for delivery of justice and protecting national security. Gabbert and colleagues developed the Self-Administered Interview and Timeline Technique as innovative self-administered investigative tools to elicit comprehensive memory accounts from witnesses, victims, and informants in time-, resource-, and security-critical contexts. Both tools have been adopted into policy in the UK (e.g., College of Policing), US (e.g., FBI), and Europe (e.g., Sweden) leading to changes in operational practice and training in police forces and national security agencies. Use of these techniques has led to enhanced information gathering, including information relevant for national security, confirmed by end-user feedback.</p>		
2. Underpinning research <p>The underpinning research summarised here was conducted jointly by Professor Fiona Gabbert (Goldsmiths University) and Professor Lorraine Hope (University of Portsmouth). This collaboration integrates complementary but distinct expertise in the contexts of police interviewing (Gabbert) and intelligence gathering (Hope).</p> <p>General Context. Two major societal challenges - the delivery of justice and preservation of national and international security - rely on obtaining reliable information from cooperative witnesses, victims, sources, and informants. Poor investigative interviewing practice, uninformed by memory science, can lead to incomplete or unreliable evidence and intelligence. The risks posed by inefficient investigations and increased threats to national security are exacerbated in contexts involving large numbers of witnesses (e.g., terrorist attacks), reduced resources (e.g., limited time or access to qualified personnel to conduct interviews), or complex events taking place over extended time periods (e.g., when informants operate in organised crime networks over months or years). These real-world challenges informed the applied programme of research described below.</p> <p>Benefits of self-administered investigative interviews. Gabbert and Hope identified a novel solution to directly address such challenges: enabling cooperative individuals to provide their own accounts using standardised and evidence-based interview formats. Drawing on psychological science of memory (e.g., benefits of self-generated memory cues in facilitating recall, R1, R2, and the role of associative cuing, R3, R4), the research team developed two core self-administered interviewing formats, the Self-Administered Interview (SAI) and the Timeline Technique, to increase the elicitation of reliable information and evidence in investigative contexts. The SAI is designed for use in contexts involving multiple witnesses or where available resources to conduct interviews with witnesses are limited, while the Timeline Technique is designed for debriefing individuals who have information to report about multiple, complex or extended events. In a series of laboratory-based experiments, designed to reflect real-world scenarios (e.g., eliciting intelligence information about meetings of a crime gang), this research developed and tested interviewing formats that optimise both the quantity and quality of information reported from memory. This is the first systematic programme of research on self-administered reporting methods in the field of investigative interviewing.</p>		

Self-Administered Interview (SAI). The original SAI was initially developed by Gabbert and colleagues in 2009, prior to Gabbert starting at Goldsmiths. It is an empirically-tested investigative tool that is used to elicit comprehensive initial statements from witnesses, quickly and efficiently. It takes the form of a standardised protocol of clear instructions, retrieval facilitation techniques, and open questions that guide witnesses through the process of producing their own statement without the need for a trained interviewer to be present. Since Gabbert's move to Goldsmiths in 2013, the original SAI research programme has been significantly extended by the development of new tools to assist specific investigative needs identified by end-users, specifically, missing persons investigations (R5), workplace accidents (R6), and road traffic collisions (G1). These new SAI tools have been developed in collaboration with law enforcement (e.g., National Crime Agency, South Wales Police) to ensure context-relevant adaptations. For example, the SAI-Missing includes the use of targeted retrieval cues designed to elicit personal details about the missing person while the SAI-RTC prompts for information about precipitating factors in collisions. Experimental research confirms the efficacy and versatility of these new SAI tools, relative to existing reporting formats (e.g., average increase of 35% for missing person descriptions; R5).

Timeline Technique. Initially developed by the team in 2013, with funding from the Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST), the Timeline Technique is a self-administered reporting format that uses a 'timeline' to provide a structure for remembering in investigative contexts (R4). Drawing on memory theory and responding to specific challenges identified by investigative practitioners, this tool is designed to obtain information from interviewees about complex events involving multiple people and/or repeat incidents occurring over extended periods of time. The Timeline Technique dispatches with the traditional notion that witnesses should provide an account in a linear narrative 'starting at the beginning'. Instead, the timeline format enables witnesses to report and structure information as they remember it, structuring the information as they report it to best reflect what actually happened. Empirical research shows that providing an account in this novel format helps interviewees recall events in the order in which they occurred, identify individuals involved, link individuals with their actions (e.g., R2, R4) and provide information about conversations (e.g., R3) by mapping out the timeline for the relevant time period.

3. References to the research

- R1.**Wheeler, R. L. & **Gabbert, F.** (2017). Using Self-Generated Cues to Facilitate Recall: A Narrative Review. *Frontiers in Psychology, section Theoretical and Philosophical Psychology*. 8:1830. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01830
- R2.**Kontogianni, F., Hope, L., Taylor, P. J., Vrij, A., & **Gabbert, F.** (2018). The benefits of a self-generated cue mnemonic for timeline interviewing. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 7(3), 454-461. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jarmac.2018.03.006>
- R3.**Hope, L., **Gabbert, F.**, Kinninger, M., Kontogianni, F., Bracy, A. I., & Hanger, A. (2019). Who said what and when? A timeline approach to eliciting information and intelligence about conversations, plots and plans. *Law and Human Behavior*, 43(3), 263-277. <https://doi.org/10.1037/lhb0000329>
- R4.**Hope, L., Mullis, R., & **Gabbert, F.** (2013). Who? What? When? Using a timeline technique to facilitate recall of a complex event. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 2(1), 20-24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jarmac.2013.01.002>
- R5.****Gabbert, F.**, Tamonyte, D., Apps, J., Caso, A., Woolnough, P., & Hope, L. (2020). Examining the Efficacy of a Self-Administered Report Form in Missing Persons Investigations. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 25(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lcrp.12163>
- R6.**MacLean, C., **Gabbert, F.**, & Hope, L. (2019). The Self-Administered Witness Interview Tool (SAW-IT™): Enhancing witness recall of workplace incidents. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 33(6), 1212-1223. <https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.3568>

***All outputs available on request**

Funding Award: Capturing best information from witnesses to serious road traffic collisions; Road Safety Trust. Award to Horry, **Gabbert**, & Hope in collaboration with South Wales Police [£77,884; November 2017]

4. Details of the impact

Overview: Prior to the development of the SAI and Timeline Technique, no empirically-tested, psychologically-informed, self-administered reporting tools existed for use by investigators. The SAI and the Timeline Technique, both freely available to end-users, have been implemented in **policy**, adopted as **core professional practice**, and incorporated into **training** by national level defence, security and policing organisations in the UK, US, and Europe. Below, we outline the key pathways to impact, and the key impacts.

4.1. Key Pathways to Impact: Working with end-users to co-identify routes to implement research on the SAI and Timeline Technique into practice comprised a range of activities summarised below. These can be categorised under the headings of (1) Targeted dissemination and knowledge exchange activities, and (2) The co-production of bespoke self-administered tools and techniques. This constant dialogue paved the way for implementation of new self-administered tools into policy and practice.

4.1.1. Targeted dissemination and knowledge exchange activities.

The following activities reflect a deliberate strategy of targeted knowledge exchange across national and international law enforcement and intelligence agencies:

- Invited Keynote and presentations to Singapore Police Force, Singapore Behavioural Team (July 2019, approx. 100 attendees from across law enforcement units)
- Invited presentation to US military and security personnel (North Carolina; February 2019; approx. 40 attendees).
- Invited Masterclass on Intelligence Gathering, Norway (June 2019; 50 attendees from 30 different agencies and 16 countries worldwide).
- Invited contribution to Research Briefing issued by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (tasked with providing impartial analysis to UK Parliament); publicly available POST briefing cites use of the SAI as a means to improve witness testimony.

In addition to targeted dissemination, our pathways to impact also involved implementation events with operational and policy specialists. Implementation events served as drivers to embed the use of the SAI and Timeline Technique in end user training and practice:

- In the UK, between 2015-2019, Gabbert and Hope delivered training and implementation events to the College of Policing, National Crime Agency, Ministry of Defence – Defence Human Intelligence, UK intelligence agencies, and regional police forces (approx. 200 attendees total).
- Internationally, between 2018-2019, Gabbert and Hope delivered specialist training and implementation events for federal agents and intelligence personnel at the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG) in Washington, US (15 advanced practitioners each cohort), and to the Icelandic police (approx. 30 attendees).

4.1.2. The co-production of bespoke self-administered tools and techniques.

Disseminating early-stage research findings led to co-development of tools and techniques for use in specific investigative contexts and subsequent trials:

- Collaboration on successful funding bid (Road Safety Trust, 2017; £77,884) to conduct field trials of SAI-RTC with UK police as co-investigators (**South Wales Police; G1**)
- Co-author academic article with **National Crime Agency** personnel (SAI-Missing; R5).

4.2. Key impacts: As a result of the activities above, the SAI and the Timeline Technique have been adopted into professional practice, training, and policy in the UK and internationally. In addition to addressing the challenges of eliciting reliable information from cooperative witnesses,

victims and informants, testimonials point to the impact of these tools in terms of capacity building and overcoming practical or other obstacles to collecting information in particular circumstances, including during the COVID-19 pandemic. Key impacts are below:

4.2.1. Impact on Training and Operational Practice – UK and International

- Since 2015, the Timeline Technique has been integrated into the training curriculum for intelligence agencies in the UK. The UK Joint Forces Intelligence Group (an integral part of the Ministry of Defence, UK) noted that *“this methodology ensures we remain world leaders in relation to HUMINT [Human Intelligence gathering]”*, citing widespread use of the technique *“extensively, on a daily basis”* that has been *“pivotal in the recent operational success that has been achieved”* with *“greater detail being established relating to individual’s movements and actions via the Timeline Technique”* (S1).
- Further, the Centre for Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) have said the research *“has been used by practitioners in unusual situations, for example the timeline technique has been used by Hostage Negotiators [who] are using it with those who have been held for long periods (over one year), and those who have been held for short periods (e.g. 1 hour), as a means of allowing them to recount a traumatic experience in their own time and not being subject to more traditional questioning methods”* (S2).
- In 2019 the Timeline Technique was adopted as a “best practice” component of formal interview training curriculum (Skill Level III for Advanced Interrogators/Analysts; S3) in the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG); a three-agency US entity comprising the FBI, Central Intelligence Agency, and Department of Defense. It has been used in key interviews in security contexts with feedback from one case study testifying that the technique *“allowed the interviewee to cue his own memory to differentiate between the different events and to provide substantially more detail than had been obtained through a standard interview process...ultimately the use of the Timeline Technique led to significant information relating to recruiting techniques and locations used by this terrorist organization”* (S4).
- In 2018, the Missing Persons Unit located within the National Crime Agency (UK) worked with the research team to develop a new version of the SAI for missing persons investigations. Use of this self-administered reporting tool is now part of missing persons investigations and feedback from trials confirms *“The missing persons SAI has made a real contribution to the way in which investigators can collect critical information from families and friends about the missing person and also enables them to contribute meaningfully to the search”* (S5).
- Since 2019, South Wales Police have conducted trials of the SAI for Road Traffic Collisions (SAI-RTC), a new tool developed for use in serious road traffic collisions and have reported positively on the impact of the SAI on victim and witness statement quality. For example, for a recent incident, the investigating officer reported *“I can honestly say despite being a seasoned statement taker there is no way I would have been able to capture the quality of evidence that she has recorded in the SAI”* (S6).
- Most recently (2020), the research team worked directly with the Service of Behavioural Sciences of the Belgian Federal Police and Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC; Belgium) to enhance response capability during the COVID-19 pandemic. This involved the development of a new version of the SAI for use with victims of sexual violence. Feedback from SARC notes the impact of the SAI on the services offered in this period, enabling victims to provide detailed accounts about their experiences when the opportunity to conduct interpersonal interviews has been curtailed due to the pandemic: *“This tool certainly represents a real added value for providing legal assistance to victims of sexual violence, and all the more in view of the circumstances related to COVID-19, which can represent a real barrier for victims to come to the SARC and/or to file a complaint”* (S7).

4.2.2. Impact on Policy - UK and International

- In 2019, after working with Gabbert, the College of Policing (the professional body for the police service in England and Wales, mandated to set professional standards including codes of practice) issued new evidence-based guidelines for frontline police officers on obtaining initial accounts from eyewitnesses to 43 UK police forces. These recommendations

were “designed to improve the accuracy and quantity of information provided by witnesses and victims in their first account to the police” and include the strategic recommendation that *“Interview advisers should consider use of the Self-Administered Interview in single incidents involving high numbers of witnesses”* e.g., critical and terror-related incidents (S8). Also in 2019, the Independent Office for Police Conduct updated their policy to recommend that the SAI can be used by officers submitting personal initial accounts on incidents of death or serious injury.

- In 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the College of Policing issued updated policy guidance specifically advising for the use of the SAI (including all versions), to facilitate timely accounts from crime victims or witnesses, particularly those who were shielding or self-isolating (S9).
- Internationally, the SAI has been adopted as an investigative tool by police forces in Norway (since 2014), the Netherlands (since 2016) and Sweden (2020) in country-wide force policy. In 2018, the Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, a branch of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE; the world's largest security-oriented intergovernmental organisation) implemented an adapted version of the SAI into their standard operation post-incident reporting procedure (S10).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

S1. Joint Forces Intelligence Group [Defence HUMINT unit; Ministry of Defence]: statement confirming successful use and impact of the Timeline Technique intelligence gathering contexts. Statement provided by [text removed for publication] [letter]

S2. Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats Independent Impact Report; focus on Timeline Technique, including testimony from security stakeholders [letter]

S3. Excerpt from Training Curriculum for Advanced Interrogators; High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG) The Timeline Technique is a requirement the Professional Development Plan for Skill Level III: Advanced Interrogators/Analysts (Course: Timelining) [slide]

S4. High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG); a three-agency US entity comprising the FBI, Central Intelligence Agency, and Department of Defense): statement confirming successful use and impact of the Timeline Technique in intelligence gathering contexts. Statement provided by [text removed for publication], Training Lead & Team Lead High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group [letter]

S5. Testimonial evidence provided with respect to modified SAI: [text removed for publication], Missing Persons Unit, National Crime Agency [letter]

S6. Testimonial evidence provided with respect to modified SAI: [text removed for publication], Road Policing Officer, South Wales Police [email]

S7. [text removed for publication] - Cellule Violence, Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes, Brussels, Belgium [email]

S8. College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice guidelines recommending use of the SAI; 'Obtaining initial accounts from victims and witnesses: Guidelines for first responders' 2019 (p.24) [report]

S9. College of Policing; updated guidance in response to the COVID-19 pandemic '[Interviewing Victims, Witnesses and Suspects](#)' March 2020 [guidance document]

S10. OSCE Post-Incident Procedure Policy and Standard Operating Procedures for Post-Incident Procedure requiring use of the SAI for obtaining accounts, 2016 (see p13) [report]