

# SPECIFIC ETHICAL PROTOCOL

*for Scientific Research at the Faculty of Psychology and  
Educational Sciences of Ghent University*

Version of March 18, 2015

Ethical Committee, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Ghent University, Henri  
Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent

*REQUEST TO THE ETHICAL COMMITTEE FOR ADVICE CONCERNING THE FOLLOWING  
RESEARCH PROPOSAL:*

## **1 TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT:**

Studies involving impression formation using videos (bundled studies)

## **2 NAME OF THE RESEARCHER(S):**

Sean Hughes

PHONE NUMBER: 09 264 86 49

SUPERVISOR (IF ANY):

DEPARTMENT: Experimental Clinical and Health Psychology

## **3 IS THERE A FINANCIAL SPONSOR FOR THIS PROJECT?**

IF ANY: BOF16/MET\_V/002 (funding to Jan De Houwer)



#### **4 IS THE PROJECT PART OF ANY COOPERATION BEYOND THE FACULTY? IF SO, SPECIFY THE INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED.**

Interdisciplinary Center, Herzliya, Israel. Department of Psychology, Yale University, USA. Department of Computer Science, Stanford University, USA. Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab), USA. Rudolf Peierls Centre for Theoretical Physics, Oxford University, UK.

#### **5 BRIEFLY SUMMARIZE THE RESEARCH PROJECT (AT MOST 200 TO 400 WORDS, ALSO UNDERSTANDABLE TO PEOPLE THAT ARE NOT ACQUAINTED WITH THE SUBJECT). EMPHASIZE WHAT ACTUALLY WILL HAPPEN DURING THE RESEARCH, FROM RECRUITING TO REPORTING (NOT THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND).**

##### **Participants**

All participants will be older than 18. Before the study they will provide informed consent and be informed of their rights. They will be recruited via the online platform Prolific (<https://www.prolific.co/>) in return for payment.

We will register the participants' identification number on the Prolific Academic system. The identification number will only be used for payment purposes. After payment, all data will be anonymized by removing the identification number.

Demographic information related to age and gender will be registered in all studies. In a subset of studies, we will ask additional demographic related questions (e.g., country of residence, ethnicity, highest level of education, employment status, income level).

##### **Informed consent**

Participants will take part in exchange for money (approximately £6/hour on Prolific). At the start of the experiment, they will sign an informed consent (Attachment 1) and be informed about the experimental procedure and their rights as participants. This informed consent document will also state what type of data will be collected and which (anonymized data) will be posted to public repository for use by other researchers. Participants will also be provided with the contact information of the lead researcher for any further questions they might have. At this point, and throughout the study, participants will have the ongoing option to discontinue their participation in the experiment.

##### **Procedural details**

We will examine how watching a video or listening to an audio clip influences the (automatic) attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of the viewer. We will examine if the content communicated (e.g., positive or negative self-statements emitted by an actor) or the type of content participants encounter (genuine recordings vs. synthetic recordings) influences their first impressions. In order to investigate such outcomes, all studies on this topic will include (a) an **acquisition task**, (b) a **test phase**, and (c) an **exploratory question phase**.

**(a) Acquisition task**

In the acquisition task, participants will be informed that they will either watch a video or listen to an audio clip. In this video/audio they will encounter a person (target) called 'Chris' who will communicate a number of past actions he has emitted (Chris is an actor who was used to create the clips). Half of the participants will encounter video/audio clips where Chris emits three positive and two neutral statements about himself whereas the other half of participants will encounter clips wherein he emits three negative and two neutral statements about himself.

In half of the cases these clips will be authentic recordings of Chris (i.e., recordings of the actor saying these statements). In the other half of the cases these recordings will be synthetically created. Specifically, we will use a machine learning technique known as Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) to alter the authentic content so that the actor's appears to emit novel statements. That is, the 'positive synthetic video' will be created by taking the genuine negative video clip and altering it so that Chris appears to say the statements contained in the positive genuine video. The 'negative synthetic video' will be created in a similar way (i.e., by altering the positive genuine video clip so that Chris appears to say the same statements as in the negative genuine video). In this way we will examine if synthetic content is capable of changing first impressions to the same extent as genuine content.

**(b) Test phase**

In the test phase, participants' attitudes, intentions, and behavior will be assessed. This includes the following measures, depending on the research question at hand:

- self-reports in terms of evaluations, beliefs about the target, and hypothetical or actual behavior (e.g., asking participants to rate the extent to which they (dis)like the target individual, believe something to be true about the target individual, would or would not try to support the target individual, intend to behave in a certain way towards that individual, ...)
- speeded tasks assessing implicit evaluations (e.g., Implicit Association Test, Affective Misattribution Procedure). All such tasks are computer-based and measure classification rates (e.g., whether a stimulus is classified as good or bad), reaction times, and/or error rates.

If we should at any point contemplate using other measures that might present issues regarding ethics, then we will submit a separate ethical application.

**(c) Exploratory Questions**

We will ask participants a number of exploratory questions about their experiences with the experiment. For instance we will ask questions concerning their:

- Recall of what was said by the target in the video/audio clip
- The extent to which they consider the information in the video/audio clip to be diagnostic of the individual's "true" character
- Demand compliance
- Reactance
- Hypothesis awareness – what they thought the experimental purpose was
- Influence awareness – if they believed the video/audio clip influenced their attitudes and intentions towards the target individual
- Synthetic media awareness 1 – whether they were aware of the concept of synthetic media prior to taking part in the study
- Synthetic media awareness 2 – whether they were aware that they had encountered a piece of synthetic media during the study

In a subset of studies we will also assess for individual difference factors such as:

- *Political Ideology* (using a 4 item-measure developed by Pennycook and Rand [2018])
- *Religiosity* (using the Religious Affiliation Scale [Pennycook, Cheyne, Barr, Koehler & Fugelsang, 2014] and the Religious Belief Scale also developed by Pennycook et al. [2014])
- *Cognitive Ability* (using the Revised Cognitive Reflection Test that was originally developed by Toplak, West, and Stanovich [2014] and subsequently revised by Bronstein, Pennycook, Bear, Rand, and Cannon [2019])
- *Preference for Effortful or Intuitive Thinking Style* (using the Rational-Experiential Inventory developed by Pacini and Epstein [1999])
- *Tendency to Overclaim* (using the overclaiming scale developed by Paulhus et al. [2003])
- *Conspiratorial Thinking* (using the Belief in Conspiracy Theories Inventory developed by Swami et al., [2010])
- *News Evaluation Task* (a self-developed task wherein participants are asked about their familiarity, perceived accuracy, and willingness to share news stories)
- *Actively Open Minded Thinking* (using an actively open-minded thinking about evidence scale that was revised by Pennycook, Cheyne, Koehler, and Fugelsang [2019: Study 2])

## **6 DOES THE RESEARCH PROJECT IMPLY ANY THREATS TO THE PARTICIPANTS' HEALTH? HAVE YOU ALSO SUBMITTED A REQUEST TO THE MEDICAL ETHICAL COMMITTEE?**

The studies do not imply any threats to the participants' health. Therefore, no request to the medical ethical committee has been submitted.

## **7 ARE THE PARTICIPANTS HAVING ANY DIFFICULTIES KNOWN BEFOREHAND? IF SO, SPECIFY WHETHER THE RESEARCH PROJECT COULD INTERFERE WITH THESE DIFFICULTIES AND WHAT PRECAUTIONS YOU WOULD TAKE.**

We will recruit participants from the general population and will not select for those with known difficulties, or utilise stimuli that would create difficulties for participants.

It is worth noting that we repeatedly inform participants that their participation is completely voluntary and ongoing, and that they can opt to NOT perform any task if they do not want to and can always choose to quit the experiment. Participants will also receive a thorough debriefing in which the study purpose is explained and if they want to perform another task than the one they were assigned to in this experiment, they can ask for this. Participants will also have the opportunity to contact the experimenter and be referred to specific experts with regard to the specific problem should they have questions about the topic after performing the experiment.

**8 IF THE PARTICIPANTS ARE ADULTS INCOMPETENT TO GIVE THEIR CONSENT, WHOM WILL BE ASKED PERMISSION TO?**

Not applicable.

**9 IF THE PARTICIPANTS ARE MINORS, WHOM WILL BE ASKED PERMISSION TO? (ATTACH THE REQUEST FORM YOU WILL USE).**

Not applicable.

**10 WILL DECEPTION BE USED DURING THE RESEARCH PROJECT? IF SO, DESCRIBE AND MOTIVATE.**

Participants will be informed that the video they will watch is taken from a YouTube channel of a person called Chris. This is not the case: the video was created by us for the purpose of the experiments. We will also create synthetic videos of Chris using footage from the genuine videos. Thus Chris will appear to say things about himself that the actor never said. In this way deception will be used – first with regard to the source of the video (YouTube) and second to the nature of the video (i.e., synthetic instead of authentic).

The former is necessary to increase the ecological validity of the information participants are receiving and the latter is a critical experimental manipulation we want to explore. Importantly, participants will be immediately debriefed about both forms of deception after the study has ended.

**11 IN WHICH WAY WILL THE PARTICIPANTS BE INFORMED OF THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT? WILL THERE BE A DEBRIEFING?**

The experimental agenda will be shared after the experiment via the debriefing page. We will describe what the experiment was about and what we hoped to find. Interested participants will also be able to find all results, the pre-registered protocol, final paper, and all other materials at the Open Science Framework URL for this project. These will be made available as soon as the project is completed.

**12 WILL STUDENTS BE CALLED IN TO ASSIST TO THE RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS, DATA COLLECTION OR DATA ANALYSIS?**

Not applicable.

### **13 WHAT IS YOUR PLAN FOR DATA-MANAGEMENT, DURING AND AFTER THE PROJECT? PLEASE FOCUS ON ETHICALLY RELEVANT ASPECTS. HOW WILL YOU INFORM THE PARTICIPANTS ABOUT YOUR PLAN?**

We will not collect any identifier with the exception of participants' identification number on Prolific Academic. The identification number will only be used for payment purposes. After payment, all data will be anonymized by removing the identification number.

We will not collect any sensitive personal data above and beyond the demographic and individual difference factors noted above. If we should at any point contemplate collecting other sensitive personal data, then we will submit a separate ethical application.

Data will initially be stored on the personal UGent domain webserver of the main researcher. After data collection, all data will be anonymized and made available on the Open Science Framework and the Ghent University data server. Participants will be informed about our data plan via the informed consent.

### **14 IN THE CURRENT STATE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT, DO YOU EXPECT OTHER DIFFICULTIES CONCERNING THE GENERAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AS WRITTEN DOWN IN THE GENERAL ETHICAL PROTOCOL? IF SO, DESCRIBE HOW AND MOTIVATE WHY THE RESEARCH PROJECT SHOULD DO SO**

Not applicable.

I DECLARE TO TAKE THE FULL RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PROJECT MENTIONED ABOVE AND CONFIRM THAT THE INFORMATION GIVEN IS CONSISTENT WITH THE FACTS AS KNOWN ON THIS VERY MOMENT. I ALSO DECLARE TO HAVE READ THE GENERAL ETHICAL PROTOCOL FOR SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH OF THE FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES OF GHENT UNIVERSITY, AND TO SUBSCRIBE TO IT CONCERNING ANY ITEMS 6A TO 6H WHERE NO REMARKS HAVE BEEN MADE. SHOULD DURING THE COURSE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT ETHICAL QUESTIONS ARISE THAT ARE NOT COVERED BY THIS REQUEST, I WILL CONTACT THE ETHICAL COMMITTEE ANEW.

THE RESEARCHER

THE SUPERVISOR (AGREEMENT)

DATE: 19/10/2020

DATE:

NAME: Sean Hughes

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