

**A book review of *Investigative Interviewing- The Essentials* edited by Michel St-Yves, published in 2014 by Carswell publications**

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A topic intimately related to polygraph, and yet often overlooked, is Investigative Interviewing. Many polygraph examiners are unfamiliar with the concept. I hope by way of this book review to introduce interested readers to Investigative Interviewing. I can think of few better ways to familiarize oneself with the essentials of concept than by reading this book. The practice recommendations from this book will surely improve the quality of anyone's investigative work, regardless of the milieu.

The book is for anyone who interviews anyone else, but is especially appropriate for polygraph examiners who are often in the unique position of neutral fact-finder. Polygraph consumers and end-users look to polygraph to solve problems that for the moment seem unclear. There is no better time to take advantage of the essentials of Investigative Interviewing than during a polygraph pretest interview. Examiners are in a unique position to establish an information gathering environment. Examinees can be cajoled into providing information that can be exculpatory or inculpatory. The interview setting can give them rope to pull themselves out of their proverbial hole - or hang themselves in the process.

I often hear examiners say they "seek the truth", but that really isn't the first step in the process. We can't get to the slippery truth without facts to check out. We can't get the facts to check out if we don't interview. Information is the lifeblood of any investigation. It provides direction; it can show attempts at misdirection. Information helps confirm what we know, disconfirm what we thought we knew, and help reveal what we don't know. Having the tools to best develop information is essential- as the book points out.

Michel St-Yves is a Canadian forensic psychologist who works with the police. He

is a friend and advocate for law enforcement which is clearly reflected in his work. His area of expertise is in conducting investigative interviews and teaching law enforcement to do so. He gathered some of the world's leading experts on the subject and had them write "how to" chapters for the book, geared towards the practitioner. While many books from academicians focus on theory, this is not one of them. This is for the investigative interviewer and it is especially relevant for polygraph examiners.

The book begins with a wonderful primer on rapport by St-Yves. Investigators are often taught the importance of establishing and maintaining rapport. But what does rapport look like? How do we get (and keep) it? Why is it essential to the investigative interview? The author tackles these, and many other of the thorny questions about rapport. In my opinion it would be worth buying the book for this chapter alone. For without rapport, the interview is doomed.

The second chapter is an update on the Cognitive Interview (CI), which should be used in every polygraph pretest interview. Ed Geiselman and Ronald Fisher developed the CI around 1985 and published their first book in 1992. In this chapter they describe updates, improvements and findings about the CI. The CI is a general strategy for guided memory retrieval based on scientific knowledge of human memory. The goal is to generate rich detail, without contamination. Over 100 empirical studies show a 25-50 % increase in detail over a standard police type question and answer interview.

In chapter three experts on child interviewing provide recommendations for conducting physical and sex abuse investigative interviews. Cyr, Dion and Powell break down

and discuss best practices for the child interview. They include; planning & preparation, communication rules for obtaining an account, establishing and maintaining rapport, memory limitation discussion and questioning strategies. The authors give several example interview protocols that have been scientifically shown to work well with children. Finally they remind us that children, including adolescents, are not just “little adults” and we need to modify our interviewing approaches to maximize information gain with this population.

Chapter four deals with eye witness memory and identification. Hope and Sauer are cognitive psychologists whose focus and expertise is human memory and decision making. We are asking examinees what they remember so it is incredibly important to have an understanding of the limits of human memory. Likewise, we engage them in decision making process, tell or don’t tell, so we should have a basic understanding of neuroeconomics. Much of this chapter focuses on witness identification so it will be more useful to examiners who also conduct police investigations that include witness identification. The authors provide the current best practice standards for conducting show-ups, line-ups and photo identification. They also give sound advice on presenting witness identification evidence in court.

A short chapter on false memory by James Ost follows and reminds us that we have incredible power in the interview room that can create false memories. Ost is a false-memory expert who has published extensively on the subject. He provides a short review that includes; what are false memories, how do they occur, what are some of the mechanisms know to create them, what is the evidence of their existence? Most importantly he provides clues or indicators of concern that a reported memory may be false. Much of this relates to claims of physical abuse and sexual abuse reports, which constitute the bulk of many police polygraph examiner’s workload.

Chapter six is the heart of the book, in my opinion. Written by Michel St-Yves and Christian Meissner, two of the current leading authorities on suspect confession and confes-

sion related concerns. They review; the importance of confession evidence, who confesses, why people confess, the internal and external pressures that precipitate confession, personality factors that affect confession, and much more. They break down “interrogation” into its component parts that mirror the P.E.A.C.E. model. They discuss important verification and control practices to try to ensure the confession is real, and not false. Many of us think we know what to do, what not to do, and how to do it. This chapter provides a benchmark against which to see if you are following recommended practices.

Gisli Gudjonsson is one of the world’s leading authorities on mental vulnerabilities and false confessions. His chapter seven is a comprehensive review of the current state of knowledge on the subject. Mental vulnerabilities are psychological states and traits that increase a person’s risk of providing inaccurate or unreliable information during an investigation. It includes; low intelligence, developmental disorders, personality disorders, high suggestibility or compliance, and recall concerns like memory distrust syndrome. Gudjonsson reminds us that just because someone has one of these, it does not invalidate their confession. His concerns and recommendations are prophylactic and protective. He reminds us how important it is to assess for vulnerabilities ahead of time, if possible. He also reminds us to reflect afterwards on whether the subject had any mental vulnerabilities that may have affected their statement or admission. Most polygraph examiners know that people we encounter can seem overrepresented by the groups most concerning to Gudjonsson. We can benefit by paying heed to his concerns and recommendations.

Aldert Vrij is a leading authority and researcher on the science of detecting deception. He has authored several books and numerous chapters and research articles on the subject. In chapter nine, Vrij updates us on “myths and opportunities in verbal and non-verbal lie detection”. This chapter should be a must read for every police officer, police recruit, attorney, judge, and criminal justice professor or professional. Vrij summarizes the myths surrounding the unassisted human lie detector hypothesis. He provides examples of evidence-based practices that actually do separate truthful from deceptive subject, though

the differences are small. He closes out with a best practice recommendation for conducting an investigative interview.

The final chapter of the book is co-written by a number of experts in Investigative Interviewing training. They provide a framework for effective police interview training. They share their thoughts and experience on the best way to train new (and old) police investigators in Investigative Interviewing. Most of the authors have been involved in police training development for many years and have helpful insights on successful training strategies.

St-Yves skillfully closes the book with his concluding thoughts on the past and future of Investigative Interviewing. He reminds us that Investigative Interviewing has moved from the realm of art into the realm of science and art. Learning from scientists in allied disciplines will only improve what we do. There is a great deal of evidence from the lab and field that supports these recommendations. St-Yves recaps the essentials of good communication skills and their importance when interviewing witness, complainants and suspects. He reminds us that all good interviews require

preparation and a mindset towards unbiased information gathering.

As polygraph examiners it seems we should be ethically bound to conduct investigative interviews during our pretest interview. We have a unique opportunity to gather information before conducting any test. That information can be exculpatory, inculpatory, or inform the investigation in some important way. If we approach the pretest interview as an information gathering event we can increase the information gained during the testing process. Many interviewees (truthful and deceptive) will provide information during an appropriate investigative interview. They simply have to be given the opportunity. The book *Investigative Interviewing - The Essentials* can open your eyes to a world of improvement. I seldom recommend any book with such enthusiasm, but this is a rare occasion.

The French novelist Marcel Proust said, "The real voyage of discovery is not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes." I hope this book helps you see interviewing through new eyes. It certainly did so for me.