



Investigative Interviewing: Research and Practice

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Unchartered Waters: Social Science in Intelligence Interviewing Contexts

Guest Editors: Michael J. Williams and Steven M. Kleinman

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Uncharted Waters: Social Science in Intelligence Interviewing Contexts

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Introduction

To the readership of Investigative Interviewing: Research and Practice, it will come as no surprise that the substantial, and enduring, problem of false confession has been addressed, in considerable depth, through multiple reviews (Gudjonsson & Pearse, 2011; Kassin, 2015; Kassin et al., 2010; Lassiter & Meissner, 2010) spanning findings from more than five decades. What, in contrast, may surprise many is that this systematic effort to understand, empirically, the causes and consequences of false confessions has generated little meaningful progress toward the creation of an evidence-based model for effectively eliciting useful information from human sources (Evans et al., 2010; Granhag, Vrij, & Meissner, 2014).

In the past decade, researchers have risen to this important challenge, and have rigorously begun to explore “what works” in the domain commonly referred to as human intelligence collection (HUMINT; Headquarters, 2006). Central to this effort has been the emphasis on eliciting information that is not primarily focused on the relatively narrow objective of gaining sources’ self-incriminating statements, but rather on gaining information of broader intelligence value (Evans et al., 2010). To be sure, this research has neither ignored, nor eschewed, research on false confessions. Empirical tests of intelligence-gathering approaches, for example, have frequently based the assessment of a given tactic on its “diagnosticity”: the reported ratio of true vs. false information generated (Meissner, Redlich, Bhatt, Christian, & Allison, 2012; Meissner, Redlich, Michael, Evans, & Brandon, 2014).

Currently, research on intelligence interviewing has not only taken root; arguably, it can be described as flourishing. For example, in 2010, the High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group (the HIG, a hybrid law enforcement-intelligence agency staffed by personnel from the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Central Intelligence Agency, and the U.S. Department of Defense) was chartered into existence: an extension of Executive Order 13491, which was signed by the President of the United States in January, 2009 (James, 2010). Beyond its operational responsibilities, the HIG’s mandate includes a robust scientific research program to assess the effectiveness of current interrogation practices, in addition to developing demonstrably more effective strategies that

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adhere to U.S. and international legal standards (Department of Justice, 2009). Thus far, the HIG has sponsored an international roster of noted researchers, including not only 10 of the 12 research articles featured in last year's special issue of *Applied Cognitive Psychology* devoted to this topic (Granhag, Vrij, & Meissner, 2014), but also one of the pieces featured in this special issue of *II-RP*. This special issue—the first of its kind for *II-RP*—devoted solely to intelligence interviewing, reflects the burgeoning interest in, and activity surrounding, the development of a science-based approach to intelligence interviewing.

Despite this increase in research on intelligence interviewing, there remain vast—seemingly limitless—frontiers to be explored. Very little research has been conducted to date to investigate the behavioral dynamics involved in such methods as the so-called “non-interrogator” approach described in the U.S. Army Field Manual on interrogation (Headquarters, 2006; Smith, Stinson, & Patry, 2009, 2010; Williams, 2012)¹. Similarly, research has only begun to consider ways to promote the disclosure of information through “priming,” a term used to describe a way in which situational contexts can influence specific behaviors, such as sources' openness (Dawson & Hartwig, 2013; High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group, 2014). A number of other potentially important factors, that might be similarly useful—including reciprocity, friendship, a sense of comfort or security (Williams, 2014)—await experimental inquiry.

The articles of this very issue are a testament to the creativity, and staggering variety, of research paving the way toward more effective approaches to intelligence interviewing. These important articles include a discussion of rapport in the intelligence interviewing context—a concept far more widely referenced than understood—that not only offers an examination of the underlying behavioral science, but also a description of a much-needed empirical measure (Alison, Susan, & McGuire, 2015); a thoughtful inquiry into how social identity can help to explain the complex, and complicated, interactions between interrogators and detainees (Kelly, Abdel-Salam, Miller, & Redlich, 2015); an innovative look at how interviewers might persuade sources when interacting in virtual/synthetic environments (Dando & Tranter, 2015); and a vitally important, science-based refutation of neurolinguistic programming as a legitimate means of enhancing the effectiveness of criminal interviews and interrogations (Bhatt & Brandon, 2015).

The guest editors profoundly thank, and congratulate, the authors for the exceptional work to be found within these pages. An additional heartfelt note of thanks, and appreciation, is extended to the current editor, Dr. Dave Walsh, a gentleman and scholar, for the honor and pleasure of coordinating this special issue. We are humbled by your willingness to entrust this special issue of *II-RP* to our care. Furthermore, our thanks go to the publisher of *II-RP*, The International Investigative Interviewing Research Group, an intellectually vibrant organization responsible not only for this journal, but also for annual research conferences at which “the combined opportunity of learning and networking is unparalleled” (S. Kleinman, as cited in Williams, 2014b). Finally, we wish to acknowledge the indispensable efforts of the anonymous scholars who diligently reviewed each and every submitted manuscript. Without your considerable efforts, this special issue would have been impossible.

We wish the reader enjoyable explorations of this landmark issue of *II-RP*.

¹ In accordance with the Geneva Conventions, interrogators may not pose as the following: a doctor, medic, or any other type of medical personnel; any member of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) or its affiliates; a chaplain or clergy; a journalist; or a member of the US Congress (Headquarters, 2006, §8-10).

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