

International Research Validates the Core Elements of the Reid Technique

Over the years numerous international research studies have been conducted on the Reid Technique – here are a few that include research from Japan, Korea, Spain, Canada and the US. All of the studies establish the validity of various core elements of the Reid Technique.

High Value Detainee Group research validates the core principles of The Reid Technique

From the Scientific American (Vol. 26, Issue 23; 2014) an article entitled, "How to Extract a Confession...Ethically" confirms the basic tenant of the Reid Technique - always treat the subject with understanding and empathy.

In 2009 President Barack Obama convened the High Value Detainee Interrogation Group (HIG), made up of cognitive and social psychologists and other experts. This winter the HIG released its findings in a special issue of Applied Cognitive Psychology.

The research concluded the following:

- Coming across as empathetic causes interrogation targets to open up more

Since 1947 the core principle of the Reid Technique has always been to treat the suspect with empathy and understanding. In our book, *Criminal Interrogation and Confessions* (5th edition, 2013) in Chapter 6, Qualifications, Attitude, and General Conduct of the Investigator, we state the following:

Treat the suspect with decency and respect, regardless of the nature of the offense. No matter how revolting or horrible a crime may be (such as a sexually motivated, brutal killing of a small child), the suspect should not be treated or referred to as a despicable, inhumane individual. A sympathetic, understanding attitude and interrogation approach is far more effective. In one of many cases that could be used to illustrate this point, a sex offender, after his confession, said, "I would have told the officers about this earlier if they had only treated me with some decency and respect."

Many of the findings of the HIG research confirms the Reid Technique, including their conclusion that the investigator should "tell your target a story about what he or she did, leading the person to believe you already know what happened." This is exactly what we do in the development of our interrogation theme. In Chapter 13, The Reid Nine Steps of Interrogation, we state that the theme development should focus on describing the suspect's behavior in light of reasons and motives that will psychologically justify or excuse his behavior - reinforcing "the guilty suspect's own rationalizations and justifications for committing the crime."

Japanese research confirms Reid approach

In the Reid Technique of Interviewing and Interrogation we have always espoused a nonjudgmental, neutral and objective demeanor by the investigator during the interview and an empathetic, understanding approach during the interrogation - building rapport with the suspect and letting the suspect know that anyone in similar circumstances might have done the same thing.

Recent research in Japan (2014) confirms that building relationships with the suspect "gets the best results" and minimizes the chances of a false confession.

[Click here to read the story](#)

Research indicates a 97.8% accuracy rate at detecting deception

A recent study published in Human Communication Research (2014) by researchers at Korea University, Michigan State University, and Texas State University -- San Marcos found that using active questioning of individuals yielded near-perfect results, 97.8%, in detecting deception.

An expert using the Reid Technique interrogated participants in the first study, this expert was 100% accurate (33 of 33) in determining who had cheated and who had not. That kind of accuracy has 100 million to one odds. The second group of participants were then interviewed by five US federal agents with substantial polygraph and interrogation expertise. Using a more flexible and free approach (interviews lasted from three minutes to 17 minutes), these experts were able to accurately detect whether or not a participant cheated in 87 of 89 interviews (97.8%). In the third study, non-experts were shown taped interrogations of the experts from the previous two experiments. These non-experts were able to determine deception at a greater-than-chance rate -- 79.1% (experiment 1), and 93.6% (experiment 2).

Previous studies with "experts" usually used passive deception detection where they watched videotapes. In the few studies where experts were allowed to question potential liars, either they had to follow questions scripted by researchers (this study had no scripts) or confession seeking was precluded. Previous studies found that accuracy was near chance -- just above 50%.

"This research suggests that effective questioning is critical to deception detection," Levine said. "Asking bad questions can actually make people worse than chance at lie detection, and you can make honest people appear guilty. But, fairly minor changes in the questions can really improve accuracy, even in brief interviews. This has huge implications for intelligence and law enforcement.

[Click here for the study](#)

Spain study demonstrates 97.9% accuracy for behavior provoking questions

In a study out of Spain (2010), researchers demonstrated the value of using behavior provoking questions during investigative interviews.

Participants were 85 students from the University of Spain. Thirty-five were assigned a naive group, and received no instruction on interpreting behavior-provoking questions. Forty-eight were assigned an informed group and received instruction on response models to the BAI questions. When reading the verbal response to 15 behavior-provoking questions from a verified innocent and guilty suspect in the same case, all but one (97.9%) of the informed group correctly identified the innocent suspect. While the naive group identified the innocent person above chance levels, there was a statistically significant difference in accuracy rates between the naive and informed group. This study clearly points out the value in using behavior provoking questions and being trained in the proper evaluation of the responses

[Click here for the study.](#)

Research confirms detection of deception substantially better than chance if viewed in context

In their research article, "Content in Context Improves Deception Detection Accuracy" (2010) the authors (J. Pete Blair, Timothy R. Levine and Allison S. Shaw) report on 10 studies that they conducted regarding the investigator's ability to detect deception when the interview is placed in context. They conclude that " Nonverbal leakage in the studies presented here is constant across conditions because only contextual information was varied (except in Study 6). The results of the tests presented here are overwhelming. When judges were asked to make deception judgments with some meaningful contextual information, they performed significantly better than chance and significantly better than 40 + years of research suggests they would. Clearly, knowledge of the environment in which deception occurs facilitates accurate deception judgments beyond what is possible based on observations of nonverbal leakage. Given the large amount of variation explained by the differences in environments (context), deception theories will be enhanced by explicitly recognizing the impact of context."

In the Reid Technique we teach that there are four rules to be followed in the evaluation of a subject's behavior symptoms:

1. Establish the subject's normal behavioral pattern and then look for changes from that norm or baseline
2. Read all nonverbal behavior for timing and consistency
3. Read behavioral cluster - the overall behavioral pattern - not single, isolated observations
4. Always evaluate behavior symptoms in conjunction with the case evidence and facts

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Clearly the high accuracy rates we achieve is based on the fact that a subject's behavior

should never be evaluated as a single determining factor, but always in context - always in conjunction with the case facts and evidence.

[Click here for a copy of the Blair, Levine and Shaw study.](#)

Research confirms Reid Behavior Analysis Interview (BAI) structure

In our book, Criminal Interrogation and Confessions, we devote Chapter 8, Formulating Interview Questions, to the topic of the importance of asking open-ended questions in the investigative Interview (BAI). The chapter contains such sections as:

- Asking an initial open question
- Phrasing open questions
- Eliciting a full response
- Evaluating the response to an open question
- Clarifying the open account
- Asking direct questions
- Asking follow-up questions

In the training manual that we provide to the students who attend our seminar on The Reid Technique of Interviewing and Interrogation we devote several pages to the Cognitive Interview process (which is designed to help enhance the victim and/or witness' memory of the event) as well as the importance of evaluating a witness or victim's account by beginning with a broad, open ended question, such as:

"Please tell me everything concerning your injuries."

"Please tell me everything that you did after 6:00 p.m. last night."

Research has confirmed the value of these techniques. In a study conducted by Dr. Brent Snook and Kathy Keating of the psychology department at Memorial University of Newfoundland (2010), their results, which will be published later this year in the journal Legal and Criminological Psychology, conclude, in part, that "officers interviewing witnesses are potentially reducing the amount of information retrieved by talking too much, asking too many closed-end questions, and failing to adhere to science-based methods for mining memory." The authors furthermore state that "only about 6% of the interviewers' questions were considered open-ended; that is, encouraging a broad range of response beyond a simple yes or no or other narrowly restricted replies. "We estimate that between 20 and 30% of all questions asked should be open-ended," the researchers state.

[Click here](#)

Study of False Confession Cases Confirms Reid Position

False confessions are a rare phenomena, but they have occurred. One of the interrogation

techniques that the United States Supreme Court has sanctioned is the verbal misrepresentation of evidence to a suspect during an interrogation. It has been the Reid position that misrepresenting evidence, in and of itself, was not going to make a "normal" person falsely confess (obvious care must be exercised with juveniles and mentally impaired individuals), but that it was always some other element that was the triggering mechanism for the false confession, such as illegal interrogation tactics (physical abuse, threats, promises of leniency, denial of physical needs, denial of rights, etc) and/or excessively long interrogations. A study published in the Criminal Law Bulletin, "A Test of the Unusual False Confession Perspective: Using Cases of Proven False Confessions" confirms this position.

After reviewing numerous false confession cases the author, J.P. Blair, states that "This study failed to find a single false confession of a cognitively normal individual that did not also include the use of coercive tactics by the interrogator." Earlier in the article the author defined coercive tactics as "the use of physical force; denial of food, sleep or the bathroom; explicit threats of punishment; explicit promises of leniency; and extremely lengthy interrogations." In other words, if these illegal tactics are not employed then the likelihood of obtaining a false confession is almost nil.

Court confirms that The Reid Technique consists of proper interrogation procedures

In *US v. Jacques* (March 2014) the US Court of Appeals, First Circuit, upheld the lower court's opinion that a confession obtained by interrogators using elements of the Reid technique was voluntary and admissible. (We reported on the lower court's opinion in the Legal Updates Fall 2011.) In this opinion the US Court of Appeals stated the following:

"Finally, Jacques claims that Mazza and Smythe overbore his will through their use of the "Reid technique," including exaggerating their evidence and minimizing the gravity of his suspected offense, in obtaining a confession. Extreme forms of deception or chicanery by the police may be sufficient to render a confession involuntary.... Nevertheless, "the use of chicanery does not automatically undermine the voluntariness of a confession." *Id.* This court has consistently recognized that "some degree of deception ... during the questioning of a suspect is permissible."

Specifically, "a confession is not considered coerced merely because the police misrepresented to a suspect the strength of the evidence against him." *Clanton v. Cooper*, 129 F.3d 1147, 1158 (10th Cir.1997); see also *Frazier v. Cupp*, 394 U.S. 731, 739 (1969) (finding that the police's "misrepresent [ations]" of a co-defendant's alleged incriminating statements were, "while relevant, insufficient in our view to make this otherwise voluntary confession inadmissible."); *Holland v. McGinnis*, 963 F.2d 1044, 1051 (7th Cir.1992) (finding "the fact that the officer misrepresented ... the strength of the evidence" to be "one factor to consider among the totality of circumstances in determining voluntariness"); *Green v. Scully*, 850 F.2d 894, 903 (2d Cir.1988) (finding police officer's "assert[ion] that he already had a strong case against petitioner" insufficient to render the ensuing confession involuntary). As the Seventh Circuit has

noted, "[o]f the numerous varieties of police trickery, ... a lie that relates to a suspect's connection to the crime is the least likely to render a confession involuntary." *Holland*, 963 F.2d at 1051.

In this case, the agents' statements exaggerating the quality of their evidence, minimizing the gravity of Jacques's offense, and emphasizing the negative media attention that would attend Jacques's trial all fall safely within the realm of the permissible "chicanery" sanctioned by this and other courts. Jacques points to no federal authority supporting a finding of an involuntary confession under similar circumstances.... Considered in the full circumstances of this case, Mazza and Smythe's interrogative tactics did not amount to coercion in violation of Jacques's Fifth Amendment rights."

[Click here for the complete decision](#)

Detection of Deception: Research vs. Reality

Over the years researchers in the academic community have conducted a number of research studies on an investigator's ability to detect deception; more specifically these studies have attempted to determine if the nonverbal and verbal behavior symptoms that are used by practitioners to help them assess the credibility of suspects are, in fact, reliable indicators of truth or deception.

In the overwhelming majority of these studies the results have been rather dismal, essentially suggesting that nonverbal behaviors (and to a lesser extent verbal cues) offer little value in assessing a suspect's credibility. (Bond and De Paulo, "Accuracy of deception judgments", *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 2006.)

In light of these results, why would field practitioners place any reliance on the behavior displayed by a suspect during an investigative interview for indications of truth or deception? One reason is that the vast majority of research studies do not mirror the context and structure of real life interviews that are conducted in the field, and, as a result, have very little relevancy to the real world.

[Click here for the complete article.](#)