

## Ethical practices in investigative interviewing for compliance and investigations

**Dana Rodden**

Metacentre Consulting, Canada

Investigations into research, design, development, procedures, and practices, can be both cooperative, with regulatory agencies and private industry, and adversarial, with issues of liability. The primary objective of any investigative interview is to obtain accurate information with cooperative ethical methods. Science and technology has changed the landscape of investigative practices primarily through audio-visual recording, bringing interviews out of the closet and allowing constructive research to contribute to the design of effective investigative interviewing techniques. Methods such as the PEACE model, conversation management and cognitive interviewing have improved interviewing skills eliciting greater quantity and quality of detail. That is one part of the equation. The other involves identifying cognitive biases of the interviewer.

Obtaining factual information is a challenging task fraught with bias, misinterpretation, and contamination. Research shows the most common biases are 'premature closure', where the interviewer pays selective attention to what fits and disregards inconsistent information, 'confirmation bias', where the interviewer's questions mould the answers and 'defensive avoidance' where information that is inconsistent with what is already known is ignored. And there is a fourth pitfall - the 'apophenic trap'. The 'apophenic trap' is the compulsion to connect the dots, make sense out of things whether they make sense or not. Irrespective of what we know when we listen to someone's story or read their statement we connect the words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs in ways which tie the text together so that it makes sense to us. Often this involves unconsciously bridging gaps in time, space and action. Consequently we warp witness accounts into partially fictional interviewer accounts more compatible to our perceptions. We read into the statement rather than from the statement.

### Biography

Dana Rodden has been researching, teaching, and practicing investigative interviewing for 32 years. He has conducted hundreds of workshops from Hawaii to Cape Town. He has researched and applied concepts of both intuitive and research psychologies, neurolinguistics and statement analysis in a variety of investigative interviewing contexts, including health and safety. Past clients have included Health Canada, Worksafe Alberta, IHASS, hospital investigators, and colleges of physicians and surgeons. He holds a B.A. degree from Simon Fraser University.

[info@metacentre.net](mailto:info@metacentre.net)