

The Structured Investigative Interview

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Investigative interviews are the most critical element of any law enforcement inquiry. Success in conducting effective and comprehensive ones improves when officers follow a structured interviewing process that provides a framework for the interview and alleviates haphazard attempts to obtain complete and accurate information.¹ Officers can use an eight-phase structured interviewing process adaptable

to many encounters between the police and citizens.

Productive investigative interviewing constitutes more than a series of questions posed by an officer to elicit a response from the interviewee. A structured investigative interview is a dynamic, conversational interaction between an officer and an interviewee with a goal of obtaining the maximum amount of accurate and relevant information while reducing the

possibility of contaminating and influencing the information provided by the interviewee or placing him under an undue amount of stress. The structured interview provides officers with a road map flexible enough to adapt to most situations they encounter, ranging from minor traffic accident investigations to complex criminal cases and sensitive administrative inquiries. The process is structured but not standardized. While



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officers should employ all of the phases of the process, they can tailor each interview to meet the needs of the officer, interviewee, and situation. With the exception of the first and last phases (preparation and critique), which do not occur in the presence of the interviewee, the phases may not always happen in the sequential order presented.

THE PROCESS

Preparation Phase

For consistent effectiveness, officers must prepare for interviews prior to conducting them. This encompasses several different categories, including strategic, tactical, operational, and legal considerations. At times, circumstances may limit the amount of preparation, but officers should try to plan as thoroughly as possible prior to

an interview. As elementary as it may appear, knowing *why* an interview is conducted provides a logical start.

Strategic preparation should involve knowing the ultimate purpose of the interview. Officers should ask themselves, “Why was this person chosen to be interviewed and what information is being sought?” Next, officers should decide who would best conduct the interview to maximize the amount of information collected. All too often, lead investigating officers handle interviews and want to participate in each one. But, strategically, the lead officer may not always be the best person to do so. This premise of selecting the best person usually appears in cases where female officers are chosen to interview female victims of sexual assault. The person selected to conduct the interview should have the

ability to develop better rapport and, therefore, maximize the collection of accurate and relevant information.

The legal preparation for an interview includes assisting in the collection of relevant information. Knowing the statutory elements of crime will help officers explore appropriate areas during the questioning phase. Without this knowledge, officers might fail to cover issues, such as intent or malice, necessary in satisfying the legal requirements or thresholds for prosecuting a criminal violation. For example, an officer responding to and investigating domestic violence incidents should understand the legal definition of domestic relationships as it relates to the applicable statute. During the interview, the officer then can inquire as to whether a relationship exists between offenders that satisfies the legal definition under the statutes. Further legal preparations consist of determining if interviews with minors require parental presence, if interviewees need Miranda warnings, or if interviewee benefits or protections must or can be made. Certain states and the federal government require that victims and witnesses receive information about programs and benefits available to them through both the government and private organizations that can help reduce the impact of the

interview.² Officers also should prepare to explain to interviewees about protections possibly available if they fear for their safety as a result of cooperating with law enforcement.

While the interviewee's safety is paramount, the officer's should not be compromised either. Tactical preparation for an interview should include ensuring that victims and suspects do not encounter each other. At the residence of a domestic violence incident, this distance may be as little as separating the occupants in different rooms. In an international terrorism investigation that involves complex counterintelligence operations, the distance needed for adequate security may be as large as on another continent.

While strategic and tactical preparation is critical, officers must consider operational planning because it often proves the most limiting factor in creating the ideal interview environment. The best strategy for an interview might involve having a female officer conduct it, but one may not readily be available. Therefore, operationally, a male officer will have to conduct the interview. Tactically, it might be suitable to offer a witness 24-hour police protection, but, operationally, witness security is not an option because of a lack of resources available to complete the task. Officers

have to consider the limitations of operational resources along with other preparatory factors.

This overview of the preparation phase, while not an exhaustive list of what tasks to explore prior to each interview, provides a method for analyzing preinterview preparations in different categories. Officers often will find conflict between the best strategic, tactical, operational, and legal approaches to

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conducting interviews. They always should design planning to conform to the necessary legal requirements associated with the interview. After addressing legal considerations and removing them from the matrix, they must determine the best balance for the remaining preparation categories prior to beginning the interview.

Introduction Phase

Although a seemingly simple task, introductions during investigative interviews play

an important role in setting the tone, as well as providing information critical to the efficient and accurate educating of information. During the introduction phase, officers should properly identify themselves and their agency, helping establish the legal or administrative authority they have over the case. Officers not wearing a uniform can display official credentials. In the event that an interviewee provides false information, and applicable laws permit prosecution for such an act, the presentation of credentials can help reduce the interviewee's later claims of not being convinced of the officer's official identity.

As a second task in the introduction phase, officers should provide the interviewee with the purpose or nature of the interview. This directs the focus of the interviewee to a specific topical area of inquiry. “Good afternoon. I’m John Barry, a special agent with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. I’m here to talk with you about the death of Alan Smith.”

During some instances, an officer may not want to immediately disclose the purpose of the interview to prevent contaminating a witness' statement or to conceal the identity of sources, among other reasons. In this case, the officer should provide the interviewee with a brief description of the nature of it. For example, the officer can address

interview activities, such as questioning and duration but not necessarily the specific reason. “Hello. I’m Mike Taylor, a detective with the Statesboro Police. I’m conducting an investigation in the neighborhood, and I’d like to take a few moments of your time to ask you a few questions.” The purpose and nature of the interview are not mutually exclusive, and officers may provide both during the introduction.

Rapport Phase

Everyone has experienced the presence and absence of rapport. When a sense of connectivity and understanding exist, where empathy and disclosure occur, there is rapport. In the unfortunate circumstances where confusion, awkward silence, miscommunications, and discomfort happen, rapport is lacking. Law enforcement professionals often overlook and rush the art of establishing rapport in the investigative interviewing process. Yet, a strong rapport and connection made between the officer and interviewee can promote the free flow of information and dialogue. When a solid foundation of rapport exists, the interviewee perceives that the officer understands, appreciates, or shares common experiences or opinions. These links and connections serve as the foundation for empathy and understanding,

the precursors to trust that ultimately lead to disclosure. The trust developed helps build the interviewee’s confidence that testimonial investments are secure and that the officer will not exploit exposed vulnerabilities.

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Rapport building serves several important purposes. First, it allows the interviewee to relax, and it diminishes fear, anxiety, or distrust. Rapport building humanizes the officer and promotes the identification of similarities between the officer and the interviewee.

Second, strong rapport building allows the officer to observe the interviewee in a nonthreatening setting where the officer can establish a baseline of normative behaviors for comparison with subsequent ones that may indicate deceptive answers when the interviewee becomes stressed. For instance, if the interviewee exhibits certain nonverbal behaviors while discussing routine, nonthreatening topics,

such as traffic patterns around the city or current weather conditions, and then changes nonverbal behaviors when questioned about the specific crime, this may indicate stress and even deception.

Third, through rapport building, the officer can begin to collect intelligence on the interviewee’s likes, preferences, opinions, and beliefs, all of which become useful information for subsequent interrogative theme development if the interviewee becomes resistant to providing truthful information. For example, an interviewee who enjoys talking about children may respond to an interrogation theme that focuses on the need for honesty to serve as a positive role model for children.

Finally, strong rapport building allows officers to relax and diminishes any anxiety they may feel as the interview commences. Many times, interviewers fail to recognize the nervousness that comes with entering into a new interaction where they have, potentially, a great deal at stake. By establishing rapport, they can reduce the anxiety, which acts as a hindrance to active listening. Many officers recognize the importance of establishing rapport as a key to promoting trust and disclosure, but they often struggle with the mechanics of how to achieve it. While

the dynamic nature of human interaction makes a “one size fits all” methodology of rapport building impractical, officers can apply certain rules. They should choose a nonthreatening topic, such as common, shared experiences to which both parties can relate, irrelevant to the primary investigative issue. For example, the officer probably should avoid talking about the perils and tribulations of law enforcement if the interviewee cannot identify with the topic. However, if both the officer and the interviewee endure traffic, enjoy the same sporting events, have children, live in the same city, or appreciate other shared experiences, the officer should mine this prime rapport-building material. If the interview occurs at the interviewee’s residence or place of employment, the officer should look for rapport-building topics in that particular environment. People typically tend to decorate space with significant objects and pictures, which provide a natural springboard for rapport-building discussions. A nonthreatening topic should allow for a free, two-way flow of information where the officer discloses personal facts, opinions, or observations. True rapport building is not a question-and-answer session but a conversation that requires the officer to make disclosures to the interviewee.

Officers need to recognize the idiosyncratic nature of rapport building—different topics will resonate with particular people and should be applied dynamically. For example, an interviewee clearly busy and in a rush will not want to chat about window treatments, but the officer still can accomplish rapport building by stating, “I understand you’re in a rush. This shouldn’t take too long.”



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By acknowledging and respecting the interviewee’s needs, the officer can further enhance rapport and trust.

Using active-listening techniques can augment rapport building by demonstrating the officer’s interest and attentiveness. Through paraphrasing, the officer restates the interviewee’s words in a different way that still captures the content and essence of the message. If an interviewee says, “I’ve never felt this way...I can’t sleep or

eat,” the officer can paraphrase and reflect back by saying, “It sounds like you’re pretty upset and that it’s beginning to impact your health.”

By observing nonverbal behaviors, the officer also can subtly encourage rapport building. Mirroring the interviewee’s body language, position, and posture fosters an atmosphere of similarity and understanding. The officer also can demonstrate empathy using paralinguistics by modulating the rate, pitch, and tone of speech to match the interviewee’s. Without crossing over into mimicry, if an interviewee talks slow, the officer should try to speak at a similar pace.

Questioning Phase

Properly formatted, phrased, and sequenced questions will elicit more accurate and complete information from the interviewee than haphazardly delivered and poorly phrased ones. Phraseology is critical; the question’s format should not lead or direct the interviewee to certain answers desired by the officer. Two types provide the backbone for questioning during the investigative interview: open-ended and close-ended.

Open-ended Questions

Nearly every investigative interviewing questioning phase should begin with an open-ended question that prompts the

interviewee to produce a narrative response, rather than a yes, no, or short answer. Much like an essay test, the open-ended question provides interviewees an opportunity to speak in full sentences and tell their story. “Would you please tell me what happened?” or “Will you describe everything that you witnessed?”

As the interviewee begins to comply with the open-ended question, officers must resist the urge to jump in with additional questions. Interruptions during narrative responses are one of the most common errors during the interviewing process.³ Officers should only provide minimal encouragers, such as “Go on,” or “Tell me more,” to keep the person talking. Using open-ended questions is the most effective manner to retrieve the maximum amount of information without tainting or influencing the response because minimal verbal interaction or prompting by the officer occurs beyond the initial request.

Open-ended questions are the logical starting point for both investigative interviews where officers know little about the case and where they have intimate, detailed knowledge. For example, a citizen goes to a police station to file a complaint. Without any foresight on the citizen’s issue, officers generally start an interview by

saying, “Tell me why you have come here today?”

Even if they are relatively certain of what a particular person might contribute to an investigation, they should begin by posing open-ended questions to avoid contaminating or leading the witness’ responses. Close-ended questions will permit officers to home in on specific information not provided during the interviewee’s narrative response.

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Close-ended Questions

Interviewing officers usually will need to clarify information provided by interviewees during their narrative responses. Answers to close-ended questions typically are shorter and address specific information requested by the officers.

“Did you see any strangers in the area last night?”

“What time do you typically arrive at work?”

“Were you home all day?”

“How fast were you traveling when you hit the telephone pole?”

Close-ended questions can be categorized in several fields. Identification questions help clarify specific information. For example, “What color was the robber’s hat?” specifically seeks to identify a color and not solicit a narrative response. This close-ended identification question could have appropriately followed an open-ended question asking the witness to describe the hat. If the witness provided a thorough description but failed to address the color of the hat (“a wool hat that covered the top of his head and ears”), the close-ended question assists in identifying the specific details of color.

Selective, or multiple choice, questions present more than one option from which the witness may choose an answer. For example, “Was the victim crossing the street or standing on the corner?” Selective questions help narrow the focus of a question to specific answers. They also are useful when trying to establish specific elements of a crime or an incident, but they can prove limiting if officers do not provide the correct answer as one of the available choices. In the example above, the victim may not have been crossing the street or standing on the

corner but, rather, walking on the sidewalk.

Finally, close-ended questions can require a simple yes or no response. While informative at times, yes or no questions may not provide sufficient detail to explain the answer. For example, “Do you know the victim?” is a yes or no question. While the response may be yes, it provides insufficient investigatory detail. If the witness only learned of the victim’s identity after the incident occurred, answering in the affirmative when queried by the officer about knowing the victim provides little useful information. Additionally, research has identified a higher tendency toward acquiescence by interviewees, answering the question how they believe they should answer and not necessarily with what they actually think or know as fact.

Indicator Questions

The most overlooked question that officers fail to ask an interviewee suspected of committing a crime is, “Did you do it?” Perhaps, out of fear that it will damage rapport or, perhaps, due to its provocative nature, officers rarely ask this vitally important question that occasionally produces an admission. While open- and close-ended questions are designed to elicit data or information from the interviewee, officers can use

indicator questions to evaluate an interviewee’s level of truthfulness or deception. These are not asked to solicit a factual response but, rather, permit the officer to assess the answer for particular responses against likely ones. Examples of indicator questions include—

- “Do you know why I’m here to interview you today?”
- “What should happen to the person who did this?”
- “Does the person who did this deserve a second chance?”
- “Would you be willing to take a polygraph examination? What do you think the results will be?”

Inappropriate Phraseology

The phrasing of questions often can prove counterproductive or contaminate a witness’

response. Therefore, the officer should avoid certain types of questions that lead the interviewee by revealing or providing information within the context of the question (“Was the car a green sedan?”). An easily influenced interviewee who knowingly or subconsciously wants to please the officer may answer in the affirmative without having any true knowledge of the car’s color. A less suggestive approach would involve an open-ended question, such as “Describe the car.”

Officers should refrain from asking compound questions, those phrased to cover more than one topic in a single inquiry. For example, “Do you know the victim, and does he work with you?” The compound question might be too cognitively overloading and cause witnesses to misinterpret, forget, or

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inadvertently only answer portions of the question. Furthermore, if they answer the entire question with a single response of yes, officers cannot be sure if the response was meant for both answers or just one part.

Finally, officers should avoid lagging-order questions, which are those they ask during the interview that correspond to an earlier response given by the interviewee but is incompatible with the current line of questioning or flow of the interview. Lagging-order questions often occur after an appropriately asked open-ended question when an officer is too eager to continue questioning or wants to begin verifying information, rather than listening to the interviewee's entire narrative response. For example, during a narrative response, a witness may mention a person named Tom and then continue to speak for an additional 5 minutes. Once the narrative response ends, officers sometimes follow by saying, "You mentioned a man named Tom. Could you tell me more about him?" This is an appropriate question, and it certainly is a better tactic than interrupting when the witness first mentioned Tom. But, it is inappropriately sequenced. Rather than maintaining the natural flow, pace, and timing of the interview by having the witness continue after concluding the narrative response, the

officer brings the witness all the way back to the beginning of the statement to further identify the information provided earlier. The lagging-order question could prohibit further elaboration on the current topic in which the witness may naturally provide the information sought without any investigatory prompting. Officers should ask such a question after the witness has given all narrative responses, and they are returning to the statement to verify the details.

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Verification Phase

The verification phase has two purposes: to ensure the accuracy of the interviewee's statement and to prompt further recall. First, the officer should repeat the interviewee's entire statement to the interviewee to prevent inaccuracies in the officer's memorialization of the interview that could occur because of misinterpretations, biases, interruptions, poor

active-listening skills, or accents or other language barriers. During this phase, the interviewee can make corrections to the officer's version of the statement.

Next, the officer should prompt further recall from the interviewee during this phase. While rehashing the statement, the interviewee will have the opportunity to add additional information. Recollection can be enhanced when the interviewee is not actively engaged in speaking but, instead, listening to the officer.

At the conclusion of questioning or after a phase of questioning, the officer then can engage in the verification phase. All too often, officers attempt to immediately clarify each sentence or individual answer that an interviewee provides. This proves counterproductive to effective questioning because open-ended questions will solicit narrative responses, and the verification process will hamper the free-flowing nature of the responses and the interviewee's cognitive thought processes. Once an interviewee has provided the statement or has finished giving information on a particular topical area, officers have an opportunity to engage in the verification phase. They might begin the process by explaining the value of the information provided and the importance of ensuring the accuracy

of the notes taken. Next, they should explain the verification process to the interviewee, encouraging the person to interrupt to correct, clarify, or add information. "The information you have provided throughout our conversation is so important to our investigation. I want to ensure that I have accurately interpreted and recorded what you have told me. What I'd like to do is go back through your entire statement as I have recorded it. While I'm doing this, I may develop additional questions to ask you. Also, I want you to stop me at any time to correct, clarify, or add information because that is exactly what this process is designed for you to do." With each correction or addition, officers should revert to the appropriate questioning phase.

Universal Inquiry Phase

The universal inquiry phase gives officers an opportunity to solicit additional information from the interviewee that they may have overlooked. It also allows interviewees an unrestricted opportunity to provide additional information that they deem important but had not been asked about or had not been able to expand upon during the interview. Essentially, the universal inquiry is a final endeavor to acquire information from the interviewee. The officer can present it in a succinct

but effective manner by saying, "If you were in my shoes as the investigator of this case, is there any additional information that you would want to know that I have not asked you about during our interview?" The officer should use dialogue that engages the interviewee more than what results with a simple, uninterested, "anything else?"



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The interviewee can provide case-related or noncase-related information during the universal inquiry phase. Case-related includes any information directly correlated to the inquiry conducted. The universal inquiry may generate additional case-specific information that the officer either overlooked or did not develop. Conversely, the interviewee may provide noncase-related information on a topic that was not the focus of the inquiry. Officers should not discourage the interviewee from providing noncase-related

information for two reasons. First, all information is important in an era of intelligence-led policing because it may serve as the predicate for other criminal, counterterrorism, and national security investigations, as well as assist in the recruitment and development of informants. Second, the universal inquiry will provide insight to officers on topical areas interviewees considered critical, relevant, or important simply because they disclosed this information without a specific solicitation for it. Officers should capitalize on this opportunity to establish greater rapport with interviewees by expressing a genuine concern for input.

Departure Phase

After completing all of the previous phases of the interview process, officers should begin the departure phase. They should not begin this phase prematurely because it clearly signals the end of the interview. Interviewees may be reluctant to provide additional information or to elaborate on what they previously provided because of an innate feeling of closure.

The departure phase establishes the foundation for mutual recontacting by interviewees or officers. While exchanging telephone numbers and addresses for postal delivery or e-mail, officers should inquire about



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any restrictions associated with recontacting the interviewee, such as at particular times or telephone numbers not to call. Interviewees may not want to be contacted at work, home, or other locations for security, privacy, or other reasons; officers should discuss these restrictions with them.

Quite often, officers provide witnesses and victims with business cards and request that they contact them with any additional information they might recall. The business card exchange has become so commonplace in corporate relationships that it almost rings with insincerity. Providing a business card is not discouraged, but it only slightly enhances the likelihood of a witness recontacting the officer. Witnesses have several reasons for not communicating with law enforcement officers after interviews. First, most citizens underestimate the importance of

the statements they provided as witnesses and victims; physical evidence and suspect confessions are perceived as more valuable. Next, most people believe that the police are thorough in conducting investigations. Even if they remember something not disclosed during the interview, they may assume that the police have obtained the same information elsewhere and, therefore, do not recognize the importance of providing it to law enforcement. Once interviewees leave, they likely will ruminate for several hours or even days over the exchange of dialogue and information that occurred. Much akin to the verification process, this replaying of information may prompt further recall of details not provided during the interview. This new information may or may not be relevant to the investigation, but, without it, officers cannot assess its potential.

Furthermore, while officers already may have acquired the information from different sources, receiving it from other independent witnesses can help corroborate or confirm it.

An officer may encourage a recontact by stating, "I know that after we end this interview, I'll think of more questions I should have asked you. Also, it is perfectly natural that you will recall more details, think of topics we did not discuss, or have questions for me. What I'd like to do is call you in 2 days, and we can discuss any additional information you recall. Even if the information seems minor or irrelevant to you, it may be crucial to our investigation." Officers rarely recontact interviewees, but the attempt will more likely solicit additional information than the impersonal passing of a business card.

Critique Phase

The interview critique ensures a thorough and complete interview and helps improve performance during future ones. While the critique phase can range from an informal review by the officer to a highly critical peer or supervisory evaluation, officers should remember to perform it. When evaluating an interview, the officer and other reviewers should assess the effectiveness of each of the previous seven steps. For example, in the preparation step, reviewers

could examine if the location of the interview was comforting or distracting (operational), safe (tactical), or more productive than another location (strategic). Did the officer introduce himself and make it clear to the interviewee the purpose or nature of the interview? Was an appropriate amount of time spent building rapport? Was the rapport effective? Did the officer employ active-listening techniques? Were questions delivered haphazardly? Did the officer contaminate the interview with too much additional information? Were any cognitive interview techniques used? Was all information verified? Did the officer employ the universal inquiry phase and conduct follow-up questions on all information received? Was the stage set for a recontact between the officer and interviewee? Did the officer use techniques during this interview that proved highly effective? Were certain techniques distracting to the officer or interviewee? Are there topical areas that need to be explored immediately or in the future with the witness that the officer did not clear up or address in the interview? What improvements can the officer make to increase the effectiveness of future interviews?

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

While officers know the importance of obtaining an

interviewee's personal and biographical information, *when* to ask for it presents particular challenges. Do officers request personal information at the beginning of the interview or toward the conclusion? In this age of identity theft, how do officers overcome resistance to providing this important information?

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The minimum biographical information officers should obtain during an interview includes the person's full name with correct spelling, date of birth, residential address, telephone number, and social security number. Requesting additional, optional biographical data may entail the interviewee's driver's license and cell phone numbers, occupational and employment information, e-mail address, place of birth, passport number, and scars/marks/tattoos. Asking for biographical data at the

beginning of the interview may hinder rapport building, reminding the interviewee of the officious nature of the interaction. Further, the interviewees frequently perceive such questions as invasive. Officers should prepare to encounter an interviewee's resistance to providing their personal information and respond appropriately. If officers determine a need to obtain biographical data early on, then they should begin with the caveat that the request is routine, necessary for the report, and vital to ensuring that the interviewee is correctly matched with the information the person provides. Also, officers may suggest that obtaining accurate biographical data will ensure that other officers seeking to obtain the same information will not unnecessarily or repeatedly contact the interviewee.

Biographical data, on occasion, may provide material that the officer can use as a rapport-building tool. For example, by requesting the interviewee's place of birth, the officer may discuss that city or state and share personal experiences involving travel to that area. If officers request biographical data in an overly serious, officious, or dramatic manner, they will stunt rapport. If they solicit it in a more conversational, relaxed manner, then they can stimulate rapport. Officers may decide to collect biographical data at

the conclusion of the universal inquiry phase of the interview after establishing rapport and after the willing disclosure of information has previously been ascertained and demonstrated by the interviewee. Following the universal inquiry phase, requesting biographical data creates a seamless transition into the departure phase and the mutual exchange of contact information. To request biographical data in the departure phase, officers could state, "I'd like to exchange information with you, so we can reestablish contact. But, before I do I need to get a few more details to complete my report." Because they express a willingness to provide their own telephone and contact information, the interviewee may follow the example and feel more comfortable doing the same.

STRUCTURED, NOT STANDARDIZED

This eight-phase process provides the structure for conducting an effective investigative interview. To successfully apply this approach, officers should understand that structured interviews are not standardized—each one will take on dynamics and directions of its own. While officers should address all eight phases, they may initiate certain at different, logical points of the interview. For example, while in the questioning phase of an interview, the

interviewee may broach a topic suitable for additional rapport building.

The objectives of the verification and universal inquiry phases exemplify the fluid nature of the structured interview. Each phase is designed to solicit additional information from the witness. If the verification phase prompts further recollections and information by the witness, the officer should revert to the questioning phase to collect the most accurate and complete information that then will be verified and may spawn even more data to question and verify.

Simply addressing each phase of the structured interview will not ensure success—recognizing the need to return to previous phases and follow through with the appropriately sequenced additional phases will. If officers generate additional information during the universal inquiry phase, they should adequately question the witness about it, verify it, and ask yet another universally probing question. Failure occurs if officers simply question the witness about the new information and neglect to verify it and probe for more information. While this can become time consuming, it is critical to effective interviewing.

CONCLUSION

Investigative interviews are a crucial part of any law enforcement inquiry. Using this

eight-phase structure will guide law enforcement officers in conducting professional, thorough, and complete interviews. They can adapt this flexible process to any interview, according to the particular needs of the officer, interviewee, and situation. To effectively employ this method, officers should remember that structured interviews are not standardized and initiate each phase at practical times during the interview. Supervisors, training personnel, and officers can improve their skills by using a structured interviewing process. ♦

Endnotes

¹ The authors use the term officer throughout the article to encompass the entire gamut of law enforcement officers, including police officers, deputy sheriffs, troopers, investigators, and agents. They employ masculine pronouns for both officers and interviewees or witnesses for illustrative purposes. Research consistently has identified the lack of structure during interviews as a major impediment to obtaining complete and accurate information. See, R.P. Fisher, R.E. Geiselman and D.S. Raymond, "Critical Analysis of Police Interview Techniques," *Journal of Police Science and Administration* 15 (1987): 177-185; G. Gudjonsson, *The Psychology of Interrogations, Confessions, and Testimony* (New York, NY: Wiley, 1992).

² The Victim and Witness Protection Act of 1982, Victims' Rights and Restitution Act of 1990, Victims of Child Abuse Act of 1990, and Victim Rights Clarification Act of 1997 are several examples of U.S. federal victim rights acts.

³ R.P. Fisher, "Interviewing Victims and Witnesses of Crime," *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* 1, no. 4 (1995): 732-764.