

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Persuasive Interviewing: A Forensic Case Analysis*

REFERENCE: Rabon D, Chapman T. *Persuasive interviewing: a forensic case analysis*. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2007, 112 pp.

The authors have extensive experience teaching criminal interviewing and interrogation techniques to domestic and international criminal justice personnel. This text centers on the “breakdown, examination, and evaluation” of the final 18 min of a longer child abuse/homicide interview. The authors review the verbal and vocal means the interviewer used to persuade the subject to admit to the events that led to the child’s death. The interview transcript is analyzed in detail so that the reader appreciates the persuasive methods and strategies used by the interviewer to achieve his/her objectives. An accompanying Student Workbook permits the reader to work through exercises and thereby apply broader concepts presented in the text.

The short paperback has five principal chapters and three appendices. The text uses a transcript of the interrogation of a man who is suspected of causing the death of his baby girl. The first chapter addresses persuasion and how communication skills can motivate an interviewee to do/admit something they have no intention of doing at the outset of an interview. Coaching points and exercises are presented as the authors proceed through the interview of the subject. Chapter 2 examines the persuasion dynamics used in an interrogation

and getting the subject to go through a cognitive process and appreciate if their answers are believable to a jury. Interviewers must be able to identify those techniques that are (and are not) successful in persuading a subject to confess. Chapter 3 addresses the stage in the interview where the questioner attempts to form a bond with the subject, shifts pronoun usage from “you” to “we,” and gets the subject to trust the interviewer enough to confess. Chapter 4 carries the interrogation one additional step in which the subject admits the act in question and ultimately to confess. In Chapter 5, the interview is brought to a conclusion, the subject incrementally acquiesces to the questioning, and ultimately admits to the act. Appendices include the initial and final segments of the interview.

This is a text that presents the theoretical rationale and practical skills that compose the steps of a successful criminal suspect interview. While interrogation is outside the domain of most forensic scientists, such questioning is sometimes necessary in the police investigation process. Still, I cannot help but think of the many confessions brought to light in recent years that were shown to be false through DNA testing. This text does not address the veracity of confessions, but it is a matter that must be considered in any effort to gather information. This book contains guidelines and methods that can be used in both academic and training settings for the preparation of criminal investigators and interrogators.

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