

Abstract

Strömwall, L.A. 2001. *Deception detection: Moderating factors and accuracy*. Department of Psychology, Göteborg University, Sweden.

Thirty years of research has shown that human deception detection ability is poor. The present doctoral dissertation, comprising four research papers, builds on previous knowledge in the psychological study of deception detection. Three experimental and one survey study were conducted, all with the intention to filling out some of the gaps in the deception research literature. Each study had an applied purpose, and the results are discussed in psycho-legal terms. The aim of **Study I** was to examine how access to repeated interrogations affects deception detection performance. In addition, the previous finding of face-to-face interacting interrogators tending to be more credulous towards suspects than observers watching the same interrogations on video was tested. **Study II** investigated whether access to multiple statements, given by repeatedly interrogated pairs of suspects, would affect deception detection performance. Concerning deception detection accuracy, common sense suggests that the use of a repeated interrogation schedule is an effective strategy for detecting deception. However, accuracy was not improved for participants with access to consecutive statements from the same suspect in either Study I or Study II. One might further expect that when comparing two suspects in collusion it should result in a higher accuracy rate than when having access to statements from just one suspect. However, the accuracy of the observers in Study II was not remarkable; it seems as if two liars in collusion can, in independent interviews, give answers convincing enough. One finding from Study I, further qualified in Study II, was that access to repeated interrogations seems to be positively related to deception detection performance only if accompanied by repeated assessments of veracity. In line with previous research, in Study I it was found that interrogators did not achieve higher accuracy rates than observers watching the same interrogations on videotape. **Study III**, a survey examining experts' beliefs about deception, addressed principally two questions. First, which beliefs do legal experts (police officers, prosecutors, and judges) have regarding detection of deception? Second, how do these beliefs fit with what is known in the research literature? In previous research, police officers' beliefs about indicators of deception and truth have been found not to match very well with actual indicators of deception. Study III corroborated this mismatch, and further showed that neither prosecutors' nor judges' beliefs about cues to deception matched actual indicators of deception. **Study IV** focused on the perception of verbal content cues such as richness of detail and consistency. Previous research has not investigated how lie-catchers' perception of verbal cues to deception may be influenced. In three experiments, the effects of situational factors such as presentation mode, suspicion, repeated exposure, and repeated assessments were examined. Presentation mode and repeated exposure to the same set of statements were found to influence the perception of verbal content. Furthermore, the perception of different verbal cues was influenced differently by the situational factors. The results of the studies included in the thesis need to be acknowledged by legal professionals, since they are the ones most in need of making correct decisions about reliability and credibility.

Key words: Deception detection, Repeated interrogations, Pairs of suspects, Accuracy in veracity judgments, Cues to deception, Perception of verbal indicators.

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