Interrogators' Claims of Lie Detection

Findings from *Interrogation: A Review of the Science: High-Value Detainee Interrogation Group*, September 2016, p.33. Detecting deception is difficult for multiple reasons:

- There is an almost universal tendency to believe that gaze aversion is an indication of deception [5], whereas gaze aversion has never been shown to be a reliable indicator [6]. Various vocal cues (hesitations, pauses, speech errors, speech rate) and nonverbal cues (such as gaze aversion, self-adaptors, and fidgeting) are believed to be indicators of deception but are in fact unreliable cues [7].
- Professionals (i.e., police) are taught to use unreliable cues to deception. For example, police officers are taught that liars look away and make grooming gestures [8], and in two studies, 75% of the police officers queried endorsed these views [4,9], but such cues are, in fact, unrelated to deception [1]. In another study, police officers watching video clips of real police interviews performed worse the more they used the typically trained cues, and students trained on the police methods performed worse than untrained students [4,10].
- Training to detect deception based on nonverbal cues does not help. A recent meta-analysis of 30 research studies showed that training on how to detect deception produced only modest improvements in accuracy of deception detection [11,12].
- Signs of deception are likely to vary by culture, although the research on this is relatively recent and scarce [e.g., 13,14].
- Traditional deception detection has focused on nonverbal approaches. For example, the Behavioral Analysis Interview, common to U.S. law enforcement [8], relies on nonverbal and paralinguistic cues of the sort that deception research has shown to be unreliable [1].
- Micro-expressions – fleeting facial expressions expressed and then suppressed within 1/5th to 1/25th of a second [15] – while indicative of genuine emotions, have been found to have no reliable relationship to deception [16].
- Neurolinguistic Programming [NLP], which is neither neuroscience nor linguistic based, has been proposed as a way of helping an interrogator discern truth telling from lying in criminal interviews and interrogations [e.g., 17-20]. However, it lacks theoretical consistency and there is no substantive evidence of its validity and accuracy [21-23].