Does Familiarity with an Interviewee’s White Lying Make It Easier to Detect the Interviewee’s Deceptions?

Chih-Chen Lee
Robert B. Welker*

Abstract

This experimental study assesses whether familiarity with an interviewee’s communicative style improves an interviewers’ ability to detect deception. In the experimental treatment, interviewers observed interviewees as they told truths and white lies over the course of ten weeks. During this period, the accuracy of detecting white lies increased from sixty-one percent to eighty-one percent, suggesting the acquisition of familiarity. After the experimental treatment, the interviewer and interviewee participated in an interview to assess a company’s hiring practices. The interviewee answered interview questions, either truthfully or falsely, about an employee’s job qualifications. Interviewers made a decision as to whether the interviewee had responded truthfully in the interview. Familiarity with the interviewee’s communicative style had an insignificant effect on deception-detection accuracy in the interview. White-lie detection skills may not pertain to deception-detection in interviews perhaps because interviewees behave differently in interviews than in non-interview communicative situations.

Keywords: Deception detection; deception-detection ability; familiarity; inquiry; interview.

Data Availability: Confidentiality agreements with participants, written with the assistance of the host university’s human subjects committee, prevent the sharing of data with others.

* The authors are, respectively, Associate Professor at Northern Illinois University, and Emeritus Professor of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale.