Credibility Assessment

Coral Dando PhD

Professor of Forensic Psychology

University of Westminster, London

c.dando@westminster.ac.uk

Overview

- Science of credibility assessment
- How people prepare to appear credible
- Challenges of credibility assessment in ‘real time’

Science of Credibility Assessment

Vast scientific and popular literature

Numerous theories

Tens of thousands of research papers & books

Many supposed experts

A lot of myths and misunderstandings

Most liars are detected post hoc

Hindsight bias

Limited advice for 'real-time' credibility detection

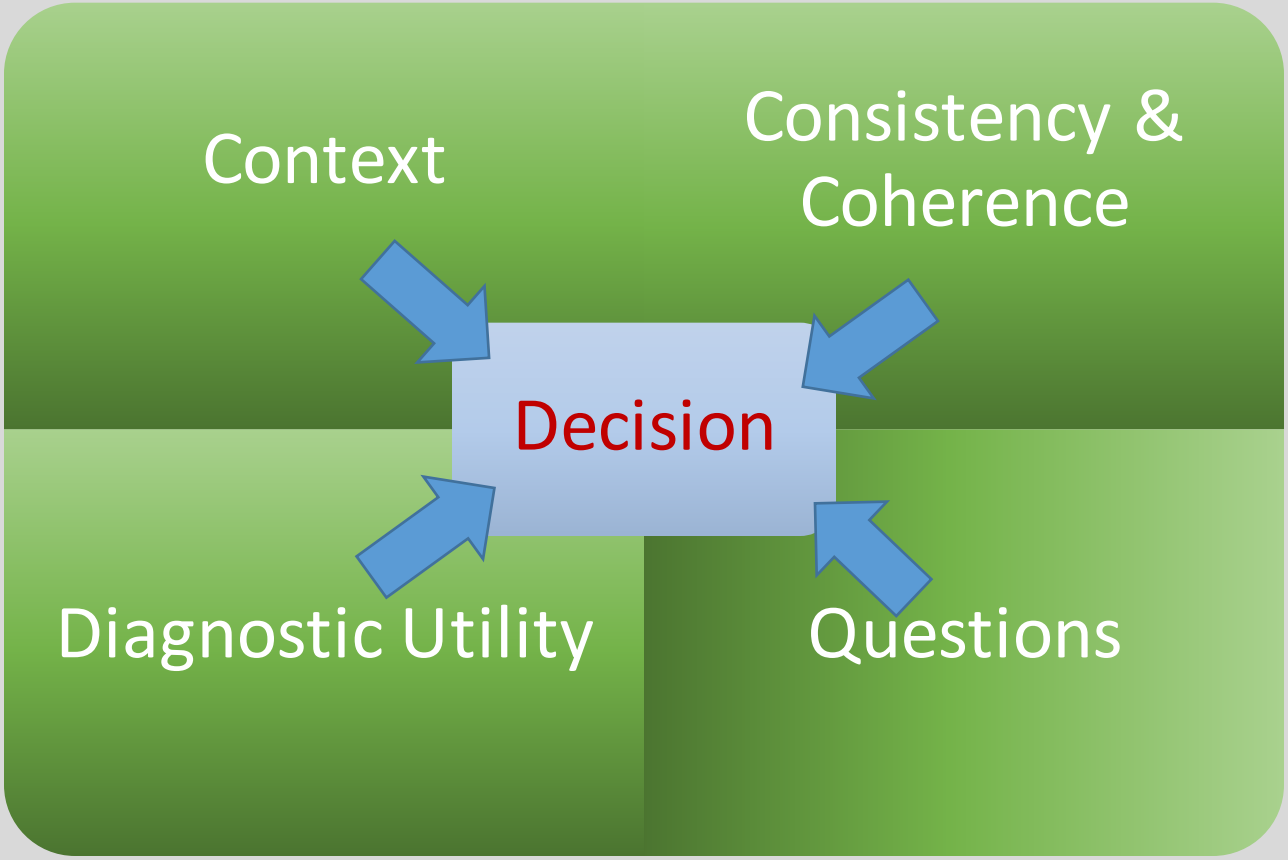
What Does Psychological Science Tell Us?

- Lie detection is **extremely difficult** sometimes impossible
  - Accuracy (even for experts) is typically at chance level**
- People **always** overestimate their ability to detect lies
  - They base their estimates on experience of detecting deceit in those close to them
  - Chance hits
- Biases affect our performance
- There are no reliable giveaway signs…
  - No one single verbal and/or non-verbal behaviour exists that is uniquely associated with lying

What Does Psychological Science Tell Us?

- Lie detection is improved when objective indicators are sought AND:
  - **Known information** is used tactically during an interrogation
  - Receiver has the opportunity to **LISTEN** to the sender
  - Stakes for the sender are **HIGH**
  - Sender's message is **SPONTANEOUS** rather than planned – Unexpected questions
  - Questions with some **TEMPORAL ELEMENT** are included in an interview
  - Receiver is familiar with some **TRUTHFUL** (control) behaviour.

Truth Default Theory



Context

- Content in context (Blair et al et al., 2010: Dando & Tranter, 2016)
  - Listen
  - Silent questioner
  - Consider the context
  - Knowing about the context (familiarity/expertise)
  - Situational awareness

Diagnostic Utility

- Diagnostically useful information can be used to arrive at a correct inference re. credibility
- Has to be sought NOT offered
- Unmanaged demeanor/behavior has no diagnostic utility – subjective and individual

Consistency & Coherence

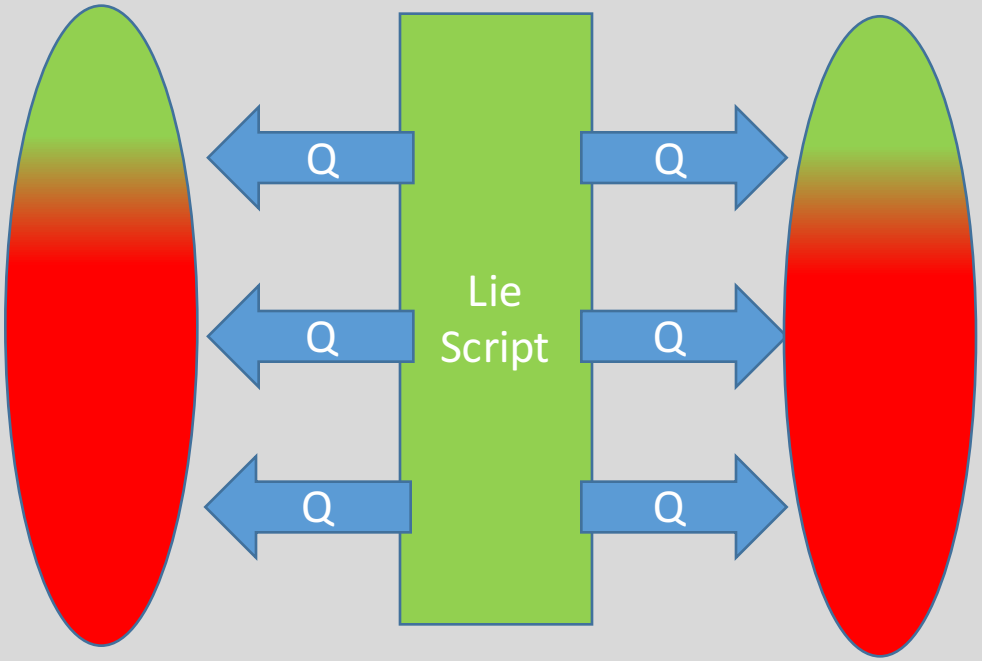
- 2 types of consistency information used for credibility assessment
  - **Consistency** = Fact checking: comparing what is said to what is known (Dando et al., 2011;2015; Reimer et al., 2014)
  - **Coherence** = Logical consistency of the communication
- Correspondence typically more diagnostic than coherence BUT…
  - Think context!

Questions

- ‘Make’ people lie
- Question effects
  - What is known OR what can be known
- Expert questioning
  - Tactical/Strategic use of known facts (Dando et al., 2011; 2015: Levine, 2014)
  - Elicitation of diagnostically useful information (Levine et al., 2014; Ormerod & Dando 2016)
  - Unexpected

Preparing to Appear Credible

- Practice
- Lie Script



Challenges of Real Time Assessment

- Lies are not transparent
- Context: Portals Vs Interrogation Vs Conversation
- Reliance on cues with no diagnostic utility
  - Pseudodiagnosticity – Selection of worthless information (Koehler, 2014; Dando & Ormerod, 2017)
  - Decision bias – prove what we believe to be correct (Dando & Ormerod, 2017)
- Lie/truth bias: most people are truthful
  - Professionals improve if trained to rely on verbal content credibility cues (Hauch, et al., 2017)

Questions

References**

- Dando, C. J., & Ormerod, T. C. (2017). Analysing decision logs to understand decision-making in serious crime investigations. Submitted for publication*, Human Factors.*
- Dando, C. J., & Tranter, C. (2015). Intelligence Interviewing: Synthetic Environments, Cognition and Cognitive Styles. *Investigative Interviewing: Research and Practice, 7,* 43-51.
- Dando, C. J., Bull, R., Ormerod, T. C., & Sandham, A. L. (2015). Helping to sort the liars from the truth-tellers: The gradual revelation of information during investigative interviews. *Legal and Criminological Psychology, 20,* 114-128.
- Dando. C. J., & Bull, R. (2011). Maximising opportunities to detect verbal deception: Training police officers to interview tactically. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling, 8, 189-202.*
- Hauch, V., Spoorer, S. L., Michael, S., & Meissner, C. A. (2017). Does training improve deception detection: A meta anlysis. Communication Research, 43, 283-343.
- Ormerod, T. C., & Dando, C. J. (2015). Finding a needle in a haystack: Veracity testing outperforms behaviourobservation for aviation security screening. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General, 144,* 76-84.
- Koehler, J. J. (2014). Forensic Fallacies and a Famous Judge.
- Levine, T. R. (2014). Truth-Default Theory (TDT) A Theory of Human Deception and Deception Detection. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *33*, 378-392.
- Reimer, T., Blair, J. P., & Levine, T. (2014). The role of consistency in detecting deception: the superiority of correspondence over consistency. *Unpublished PhD Thesis,* Perdue University, West Lafeyette.