Liar Liar: Gender Differences in Deception Detection

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Liar Liar: Gender Differences in Deception Detection

Jake Avendano, Kelly Boris, & Faith Plummer
Advisor: Susan T. Davis, Ph. D.

Background
The present study explores the relationship between social awareness, type of questioning, gender effects, and deception detection. Following are important definitions of concepts and tools used in this research:

- We can bias someone’s perception of another person by the way a question is worded (Questionnaire design; Ulatowski, 2013).
- Direct Question: An explicit measure of deception detection. Direct questions focus on personality characteristics associated with deception (DePaulo, 2018).
- Indirect Question: Lie detection does not access implicit knowledge but focuses on the perceiver’s use of more useful cues. Indirect questions focus on biases, and verbal and body language (Street & Richardson, 2015).
- Deception Detection Experts: People who are naturally adept, who have undergone extensive training, or who are professionally experienced at recognizing and interpreting behavioral signals of deception (Levine et al., 2014).
- Social Awareness: Mental events in which one forms a mental representation of either oneself or another person (Sheldon, 1996).
- Social Awareness Inventory (SAI) assesses individual differences in social awareness of emotion demonstrated by others (Sheldon, 1996).

Hypotheses

- Hypothesis 1: Indirect questioning as compared to direct questioning of an interviewee’s dishonest responses will produce more accurate determinations of dishonesty that correspond with research-supported correlates of dishonesty.
- Hypothesis 2: Female participants as compared to male participants will produce more accurate evaluations of dishonesty of the interviewee in the video, but dependent on the type of question asked.

Methods
- Participants (Women = 105; Men = 102) were administered an informed consent and a basic demographic questionnaire asking about age, gender, school year, and race.
- Participants randomly assigned to direct or indirect question conditions, viewed 4 short videos, featuring male and female actors, truthful or lying, and answered a series of questions for each video.

Dependent Variable: Mean accuracy in detecting honesty or deception when prompted with either indirect questions or direct questions.

Analyses of the data produced a significant main effect of type of test, direct versus indirect, $p < .0005$. As can be seen in Table 1, accuracy in detecting deception was always greater when participants responded to indirect questions about the actor in each video than when they responded to direct questions about the actor.

Analyses of the effect of type of indirect question revealed that questions that focused on the honesty of the verbal responses of the actor had the greatest effect on accurate deception detection, $p = .001$ (See Table 1), regardless of sex of the participant. That is, there was no interaction between sex and type of indirect question.

Results and Discussion

- Our first hypothesis was supported in that indirect questioning of viewers produces more accurate detections of deception and honesty. Continuing analyses will focus on potential interactions between gender of actor and type of questions asked of the participants.
- Our second hypothesis was not statistically supported in that men and women did not reliably differ in their deception detection as a function of type of indirect question. Although there are indications in the data that the biggest differences between men and women may relate to perceived biases (e.g., that perceptions about occupation may be related to deception), more literature research will continue to pursue whether these possibilities are realistic and what contributes to previously identified bias effects.

Table 1. Mean Proportion Correct Detection (SD) for Direct Questions and Type of Indirect Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Question</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Mean Proportion (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>.55 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>.51 (.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>.42 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>.46 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor’s Body Language</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>.58 (.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>.52 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actor’s Verbal Responses</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>.34 (.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>.42 (.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewer’s Perceived Biases</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>.56 (.04)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>.52 (.03)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References


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