

## Book Reviews

### ***Detecting Lies and Deceit: The Psychology of Lying and the Implications for Professional Practice***

ALDERT VRIJ. (2000) Wiley: Chichester. xv + 254 pp. ISBN 0-471-85316-X, £34.99

*Detecting Lies and Deceit* is a clearly written and well organised review of the scientific literature on detecting deception. Studies are discussed judiciously and in detail, so that the reader gains an overall picture not only of how the research has been conducted, but also of its merits and demerits. As such, this overview constitutes an invaluable sourcebook.

In the introductory chapter, Vrij discusses the social psychology of lying. The book is then divided into three main sections: on non-verbal behaviour, on speech and on the professional detection of deception. In Part 1 (the section on non-verbal behaviour), there is one chapter on how people behave when they lie, a second on common beliefs about how liars behave. These perspectives are by no means the same. Vrij points out how some popularly held beliefs are quite mistaken, also that there is no simple answer to the question how people actually do behave when lying.

Part 2 focuses on verbal characteristics of deception. Vrij gives particular attention to two techniques of content analysis: Statement Validity Assessment (SVA) and Reality Monitoring (RM). He gives cautious support to both these techniques, although he explicitly rejects the use of SVA evaluations as substantial evidence in court (as is the case in several countries worldwide).

Vrij devotes Part 3 to the professional detection of deception. One chapter focuses on the use of the polygraph. Again, Vrij's evaluation is cautious. While he acknowledges the usefulness of the polygraph under certain circumstances, he does not believe it to be sufficiently reliable for use on its own as substantial evidence in court.

If all these techniques have their limitations, does this mean that psychology has little to contribute to the study of deception? This would be an overly negative conclusion. Vrij is cautious rather than pessimistic. Indeed, he maintains that these techniques are more useful if people are aware of their limitations. Furthermore, in his final chapter, he goes on to provide clear and concise guidelines for detecting lies. For the practitioner, this should be invaluable.

I have two main reservations about this book. Dividing it into discrete sections on non-verbal behaviour and speech embodies a dated dichotomy, which contemporary researchers on interpersonal communication have become increasingly eager to jettison. In fact, in detecting deception, inconsistencies between speech content and non-verbal behaviour may be extremely important. While Vrij does acknowledge this, I would like to see him give much more attention to the inter-relationship between speech and nonverbal behaviour.

My second reservation is that the focus on deception is rather narrow. There is now a burgeoning research literature on the related field of equivocation, but Vrij does not even give this a mention. I would like to see him give some attention to this topic, for example, to the issue of whether people equivocate to avoid lying, or whether equivocation itself can be seen as lying in an attenuated form, and hence a possible cue to deceit.

However, notwithstanding these reservations, *Detecting Lies and Deceit* is in my view an invaluable contribution to the scientific literature on deception. I have no hesitation in recommending it.

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### ***Knowledge & The Probation Service***

P. WHITEHEAD & J. THOMPSON. (2004). Wiley, Chichester, 222 pp. ISBN 0-470-09204-1, £21.99

Whitehead and Thompson have set out to address the widening gap that seems to exist between the knowledge of a trainee and the actual practice of the probation officer. Suggesting that '... in preparing people to become probation officers it is not enough to be driven by a managerial agenda preoccupied with consistency, minimum standards and measurable performance'. Here they conclude that it is as important to recognise their [the trainee and qualified officers] individuality, and 'learn that it is the engine of their own motivation and is central to successful working relations' (p. xi–xii). With this in mind, Whitehead and Thompson have co-authored a book, which seeks to provide relevant and accurate information that will inform and support a continuing growth of knowledge and understanding, for both the trainee and their Practice Development Assessors.

There is good use of the opening chapter, providing an interesting discussion of the history and development of the service from the Police Courts Missionaries, of 1876, through the 1907 Probation of Offenders Act, the first training schemes of the 1930s and continuing with the more specialised and specific training of the 1990s. This is supported and supports subsequent chapters, using the basis of knowledge provided by this first chapter in an effort to build a picture of the probation officer in practice.

Chapter two attempts to provide the trainee with some understanding of where the basis of training arose from and to a point, why. However, there seems—at times—to be a lack of depth, skimming the background issues in order to achieve a closer debate of current practice and the importance of training in today's climate of knowledge excellence. For a chapter that begins by suggesting the importance of understanding the changing discourse, it seems that it does not pay the same heed to its own words which it expects from the trainee. This is noted only in so much as at times it seems that the chapter loses focus, or at least there seems information superfluous to the needs of the trainee (and reader), whereas other areas—i.e. theory and practice—detail information that will help sustain and guide the individual as they move from training to qualified practitioner. That said, it is recognised that this is an integral and important chapter of the book, if the trainee is to understand the importance of knowledge in the workplace.

The links from chapter two to three are evident and in this way the authors have been able to make clear the relationship between the need for knowledge and the development of a Diploma in Probation Studies. The chapter gives a good description of the NVQ basis of study and the role of Occupational Standards. Whitehead and Thompson have done well to tie the importance of knowledge, theory and practice to the role of the PDA and the importance of their role in supporting, assessing and guiding learning. However, I am again mindful of the fact that this is not only a document for new members of staff (although it should be a consideration of employing areas), but also for PDAs and managers alike. I just wonder if it would not have been better served as an introductory text for all new staff members and to have produced a supplemental or second text, which was directed specifically to the more senior officers, PDAs and managers of the now 'National Service'. In this way perhaps picking up on the links that

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