

**Note:** This paper was submitted to me in a previous section of the course PSY2110, Social Psychology. The student who wrote this paper graciously permitted me to use it as an example for future students. This paper received a solid, but not perfect, mark. The purpose of providing this example is so that you will know whether you are on the right track, not to show you what a 20/20 paper looks like. I have included a few highlighted comments in the paper to illustrate some improvements that I would hope to see.

Dr. Coates

## **Deception and its Detection among Friends and Stranger: A Literature Review**

“Everybody lies” according to fictional TV character Dr. House (Shore, 2004). Sometimes, we all feel this way after we interact with people who lie frequently. But does the relationship with someone else change the type, frequency, or the ability to detect lies in that person? This question will be answered through reviewing research regarding type and frequency of deception among friends versus strangers as well as detecting deception between friends and strangers.

This review includes four qualitative [I think the writer means quantitative. Dr. C] studies, written from 2002 to 2012. The studies selected will be described according to the study. All authors (Anderson, DePaulo & Ansfield, 2002; Ennis, Vrij & Chance, 2008; Householder & Wong, 2011; Swol, Malhotra & Braun, 2012) explored deception between friends and strangers. Ennis et al. (2008) focused on type, frequency of lie told, and attachment, while Anderson et al. (2002), Swol et al. (2012), and Householder and Wong (2011) explored the ability to detect deception between friends and strangers. Ennis et al. (2008), Anderson et al. (2002), Swol et al. (2012), and Householder and Wong (2011) used various methods of qualitative research. Ennis et al. (2008) used correlational research design, Anderson et al. (2002) used an experimental – longitudinal research design and, Swol et al. (2012), and Householder and Wong (2011) used an experimental – cross sectional research design. Sample sizes within the qualitative studies ranged from one hundred to two hundred and eight participants of a mixture students from various universities.

### **Individual Differences and Lying in Everyday Life**

The study by Ennis et al. (2008), examined the types and frequency of lies and the types of attachment that correlate. The study included 100 students from a university in the United Kingdom. Out of the sample, just over half were female. The participants ranged in age from 18-44, with the average age being 23. The study predicted that self-centered lies would be told most often to strangers and that other-oriented and altruistic lies would most often be told to close friends and romantic partners. The study also predicted that most lies told would be to benefit themselves. They also hypothesised that attachment avoidance and self-centered lies are positively

correlated; and that attachment anxiety, self-centered, other oriented lies are positively correlated. The independent variable was the terms and definitions of “Stranger,” “close friend,” and “deception” essentially the emotional closeness of the relationship in which they are using to complete the questionnaire. The dependent variable was the frequency and type of lie told.

This study consisted of two questionnaires: the deception questionnaire and the Experiences in Close Relationships – Revised questionnaire (ECR-R) (Fraley, Waller & Brennan, 2000). The questionnaire regarding deception was made up of two parts – one about lying to strangers, the other about lying to close friends (best friend or romantic partner). Both questionnaires made use of the seven-point Likert scales. Questionnaires were completed individually in reasonably quiet conditions and in the same order. Definitions of key terms were printed on questionnaires to provide clarity. (Ennis et al., 2008) [This may be slight overkill on the description of the measures, but I like how it shows that the writer clearly understands what was being measured, Dr. C]

The study concluded that lying to strangers vs. lying to friends differs in the frequency and type of deception. Attachment anxiety relates to the frequency of deception to close friends and strangers and attachment avoidance predicts deception towards romantic partners. It was also concluded that more lies are reportedly told to strangers than to close friends on average per week and that more lies are told to close friends than to romantic partners. Self-centered lies were reported as being used more often than altruistic lies. (Ennis et al., 2008) [By this point I am noticing the accumulation of typos, spelling mistakes, minor APA errors, and odd word choice, and would probably think about taking off some marks for style. Dr. C]

There were some limitations to this study. The exact nature of the emotional bond was not looked at in detail, either was the interpersonal attractiveness factor and relationship status. Also there is a possibility that best friends and romantic partners may have different deception detection cues. Additionally this study is limited to university students in the UK, so other cultures are not addressed significantly. Another limitation is the possibility that the participants lied on the questionnaires, response bias, and individual awareness of deception frequency. (Ennis et al., 2008)

### **The Development of Deception Detection Skill: A Longitudinal Study of Same-Sex Friends**

The longitudinal study by Anderson et al. (2002), examined the ability to detect deception in friends after having known them for a month and then again six months into the relationship. The study included 104 friends, taking an introductory psychology course at Virginia University. Just over half of the participants were women. Each set of friend has known their same-sex friend for approximately one month. It was predicted that emotionally close friends will improve their accuracy in detecting deception in each other over time. Less close friends will decrease the amount that they view their friend is telling the truth, over time. The independent variable was whether the sender told the truth or was deceptive in the story in which they told. The dependent variable was the accuracy in which the judge could detect the deception.

Participants were pairs of men and women who considered themselves friends after having known each other approximately one month. Members of each pairs had to be the same sex. One member from each pair told the other, four life stories from randomly assigned topics. They had four minutes after each story to discuss and ask questions about the story. The other member was required to guess whether each story was the truth or a lie. They also rated their confidence, comfort and suspiciousness of each story. This was done after the pair had known each other for a month and then again after the partners had known each other for six months. (Anderson et al., 2002)

This study concluded that accuracy at detecting deception did not improve over time for friends in general. Emotionally closer friends improved in their ability to spot truths and lies over time. Less close friends started to view all stories as less truthful over time. When using indirect measures of detecting deception, results showed that all pairs of friends could distinguish the truthful stories from the lies. The study also concluded that friends were more confident, more comfortable, less suspicious and felt they got more information when the story told was a truth. (Anderson et al., 2002) One of the limitations of the study was that there was no control for the types of follow up questions that were asked (just suggested ones to keep the conversation going). Another limitation was that friends were only tracked six months, therefore if the ability to detect

deception between friends was only beginning to strengthen at the sixth month point in the relationship than the study does not give a complete picture of the ability to detect deception in friends. Another limitation was that all participants were approximately around the same age. (Anderson et al., 2002)

### **Deception and its Detection: Effects of Monetary Incentives and Personal Relationship**

**History** [So, here is where we really need a connection between sections. We have just learnt about a study that use true/false stories, which honestly are not particularly *important* kinds of lies. The writer should have ended the previous paragraph with a statement to this effect, and then started the next paragraph by saying that the Swol et al study helps to fill this gap. That would provide some flow between the sections that is lacking here. Dr. C]

Swol et al. (2012) studied deception detection in consequential lies between friends and strangers. A total of 104 Midwestern University students participated in this study. Just over half were female. It was predicted that participants would be more likely to lie when more money was at stake, and when dealing with strangers. The study also hypothesised that participants would be more suspicious when more money was at stake and when dealing with strangers. They also guessed that participants would be less likely to lie to a friend. The amount of money given to the allocator, who then chose how much of the money they would give to the recipient, was the independent variable. The dependent variable was the ability of the receiver to detect if the allocator was lying or being fair.

The experiment was set up similar to a game. Participants were given instructions based on their assigned role (allocator or recipient). Allocators were given \$5 or \$30 to allocate to their friend or stranger, during the first session. During the second session the allocator would be with the other person and with the amount of money they had not received yet. The allocators were told that the other person (friend or stranger) would not be told the exact amount of money they were given, just that they would receive between \$0 and \$5, or \$0 and \$30. The allocator was given free rein to decide how much they would allocate to the other person. The decision was written down and then they met with the recipient for 2 minutes, where they would announce their decision and

allowed to talk freely. After the interaction both returned to their own separate rooms, where the recipient decided to accept or reject the allocators offer. The money was distributed accordingly after both participants filled out two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was based on the behaviours in the two interactions (detection of deception), and the second provided manipulation checks. (Swol et al, 2012)

The study was different from other deception research, because it used monetary negotiation to analyse deception in a way that gives incentives to deceivers and detectors. Deception by omission was also analysed and it was found that the omission differed depending on different measures, including the way the people holding the money communicated with the other party; the people holding the money elaborated with lies but not with deception by omission. The study found that people were more trusting of their friends, confirming a truth bias and the veracity effect. (Swol et al, 2012)

There were several limitations in this study. For example participants had only one item to lie about and only two minutes to have a discussion. The time for the recipient to make a decision is limited and in real life people can be lying about more than one thing at a time. The recipients knew the range of money that could be given; in real day business transactions this is not always true. The study characterizes omission as a type of lie. In real life this is not always seen to be the case depending on culture. Another limitation was that because of the low number of lies actually seen in the study, it limits how the study can be generalized. (Swol et al, 2012)

### **Mood State or Relational Closeness: Explaining the Impacts of Mood on the Ability to Detect Deception in Friends and Strangers**

Householder and Wong (2011) conducted a cross-sectional experiment on the effects of an individual's mood on their ability to detect deception between friends and strangers. The study included 208 students, taking a basic communication course at a large southwestern university. The majority of the participants were white, European American women who were approximately twenty years of age. It was hypothesised that as the closeness of the relationship increases, the person being deceived will be able to identify more unexpected behaviours by the deceiver. The

independent variable was the mood of the participant trying to detect the deception in either a friend or a stranger. The dependent variable was the accuracy in which the deception was detected.

Participants were randomly assigned to be happy or sad. Half were asked to bring a close friend, while the other half were asked to come alone. The experiment consisted of a 10 question interview between either the close friends or complete strangers. Participants were told that they needed to lie for either the first or last 5 questions. The consequence for being found lying was that they would be required to fill out a longer questionnaire. (Householder & Wong 2011)

This study found that one's ability to detect deception was affected by one's mood. Participants that were in a happy mood revealed a decreased likelihood to be able to detect deception, while participants in a sad mood revealed an increased likelihood to be able to detect deception. This study also concluded that there was no difference in the likelihood to detect deception in that of friends or strangers. (Householder & Wong 2011)

There were a few limitations to this study. There was no control group meaning that there was no group of participants with a neutral mood detecting deception, to compare the findings with. Also the media clip used to create the sad mood was law and order, a detective based show, which could be priming the participants to look out for deception. Another limitation was that there was no control for the amount of time for an interview or the types and amounts of follow-up questions following a required interview question. (Householder & Wong 2011)

### **Connections between Studies**

These studies on deception and its detection in friends and strangers has increased the amount of knowledge regarding deception for the social psychology society. The information in these four studies builds upon each other to help increase the general knowledge of the topic. Since strangers are lied to more often than friends (Ennis et al. 2008; Swol et al., 2012), it makes sense that people are generally more trusting of their friends than strangers (Swol et al., 2012) and that less close friends start to view each other as less truthful over time (Anderson et al., 2002). [This is terrific, exactly the kind of connections between articles that I'm looking for! Dr. C] Surprisingly,

even with the previous findings, there was no difference in the likelihood to detect deception in that of friends or strangers (Householder & Wong, 2011).

Overall, people in general do not lie very much. (Swol et al., 2012) Which could explain why people are not that good at detecting lies and do not get better after a relationship has strengthened (from 1 month to 6 months) (Anderson et al., 2002). But with that being said emotionally closer friends do get better at spotting lies and truths according to Anderson et al. (2002). Also Householder and Wong (2011) concluded that mood affects the ability to detect deception, which could mean that there are other factors that also have been affecting individual's abilities to detect deception. According to Anderson et al. (2002) friends were more confident, more comfortable, less suspicious and felt they got more information when their friend was telling a truth rather than a lie. [This part is more a summary, and less of an integration, of the research findings. See the difference? Dr. C]

### **Future Research Recommendations**

Due to the limitations in these studies, there are a few gaps which could be filled by conducting more research. One such gap that is evident in a lot of social psychology research is the cross cultural applicability of the research findings. In order to remedy this for deception detection among friends and strangers, researchers would need to conduct a study that encompassed cultures of countries not including the United States and the United Kingdoms. This would ensure the ability to generalize the studies finding to different parts of the world. Another gap in the research lies in exploring how different moods (besides happy and sad) affect deception detection.

Additionally it would be interesting to pursue a study in the ability to detect deception among friends who have developed a friendship longer than six months to see if that increases the ability to detect lies. That being said one of the studies briefly touched on lying to romantic partners. It would be very interesting to explore deception detection among romantic partners separately from close friends. It would also be fascinating to investigate the ability to detect lies in friends with people from different age groups.

An additional limitation in the research is the length of time in which individuals are given

to determine if a participant is being deceptive. In real life people sometimes detect deception after several conversations and interactions with the individual. Another area to look at is the consequences (besides that of money) of lying to friends versus strangers and the effect that it has on whether the individual lies and if so how they lie as to not be detected. This could also affect the ability of the individual to detect the deception. [I like this, but it is fairly redundant with previous sections on the individual studies. Dr. C]

### **Real World Applications**

Studies on deception detection among friends and strangers are directly relevant to everybody's everyday life. Most importantly it brings awareness; awareness about people's tendency to view friends as more truthful than strangers, and the awareness of how much others tend to lie.

The information found in the studies has a wide area in which it can be applicable in individual's personal lives as well as their careers. It can help when doing a business deal as the individual is aware that they are more suspicious of strangers than friends. These studies can also help teachers and professors tell if their students are lying to them about assignments, cheating, etc as they are more aware of the factors that influence lying (benefits outweighing the consequences). Lie detection is also useful for law enforcement career as the individuals will be able better able to detect lies among the people that they work with. Additionally, knowledge of findings in the detection deception among friends and strangers could potentially aid law enforcement with the ability to see and understand interactions between suspects and accomplices. [Pretty good stuff here. I would like to see more about the application of the specific studies, rather than the importance of the field as a whole. Dr. C]

### **Conclusion:**

Dr. House is correct when he says "Everybody lies" (Shore, 2004). But these studies have shown that, while not everybody lies too often, people are still more likely to deceive those they don't know, before they lie to the ones they do. Individuals are better at knowing when a close friend lies to them, and are better at knowing when someone is lying when in a sad mood. Based

on the research, awareness has increased in what to watch for in different situations when interacting with both friends and strangers. Law enforcement could analyze an interaction between a suspect and an assumed accomplice to figure out if it was just a one person job, or if there were multiple parties involved. In everyday life, we know that we can trust our close friends better than a stranger, and we know we could possibly get away with a lie if we tell the other person when they are happy.

## References

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