



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

# Journal of Experimental Child Psychology

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jecp](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jecp)



## Brief Report

# Can parents detect 8- to 16-year-olds' lies? Parental biases, confidence, and accuracy



Angela D. Evans<sup>a,\*</sup>, Jasmine Bender<sup>a</sup>, Kang Lee<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario L2S 3A1, Canada

<sup>b</sup> University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5R 2X2, Canada

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Available online 24 March 2016

### Keywords:

Lie detection  
Honesty  
Children  
Adolescents  
Parents  
Close relationships

## ABSTRACT

Honesty is a crucial aspect of a trusting parent–child relationship. Given that close relationships often impair our ability to detect lies and are related to a truth bias, parents may have difficulty with detecting their own children's lies. The current investigation examined the lie detection abilities (accuracy, biases, and confidence) of three groups of participants: non-parent group (undergraduates), parent–other group (parents who evaluated other peoples' children's statements), and parent–own group (parents who evaluated their own children's statements). Participants were presented with videos of 8- to 16-year-olds telling either the truth or a lie about having peeked at the answers to a test and were asked to evaluate the veracity of the statement along with their confidence in their judgment. All groups performed at chance in the accuracy of their veracity judgments. Furthermore, although all groups tended to hold a truth bias for 8- to 16-year-olds, the parent–own group held a much stronger truth bias than the other two groups. All groups were also highly confident in their judgments (70%–76%), but confidence ratings failed to predict accuracy. These findings, taken together, suggest that the close relationship that parents share with their own children may be related to a bias toward believing their children's statements and, hence, a failure to detect their lies.

© 2016 Published by Elsevier Inc.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [aevans@brocku.ca](mailto:aevans@brocku.ca) (A.D. Evans).

## Introduction

Whereas honesty is important for maintaining social relationships, dishonesty can have long-lasting negative effects on a trusting relationship (e.g., Schweitzer, Hershey, & Bradlow, 2006). Trust is particularly important for the parent–child relationship because it allows for open communication and can provide a buffer against negative outcomes such as delinquent behaviors (Borawski, levers-Landis, Lovegreen, & Trapl, 2003; Metzger, Ice, & Cottrell, 2012; Sakai, 2010). Such trusting relationships are at risk when lies are told. Research has demonstrated that children (e.g., Evans & Lee, 2013; Polak & Harris, 1999; Talwar & Lee, 2002), adolescents (e.g., Evans & Lee, 2011), and adults alike (e.g., DePaulo & Kashy, 1998) regularly tell lies, which risks violating trust if caught. Thus, parents' ability to detect children's lies plays an important role in the parent–child relationship.

### *Adults' ability to detect lies*

In a comprehensive meta-analysis, Bond and DePaulo (2006) showed that adults make correct veracity judgments only approximately 54% of the time, a rate not significantly different from chance. Research examining adults' ability to detect children's deception has shown more variability, although rates still hover around chance (e.g., Crossman & Lewis, 2006; Edelman, Luten, Ekman, & Goodman, 2006; Strömwall & Granhag, 2005; Talwar, Crossman, Gulmi, Renaud, & Williams, 2009; Talwar & Lee, 2002; Talwar, Lee, Bala, & Lindsay, 2006; Vrij, Akehurst, Brown, & Mann, 2006; Westcott, Davies, & Clifford, 1991).

One important aspect of deception detection that has been examined during adulthood is the relationship between the detector and the deceiver. McCornack and Parks (1986) proposed a model of deception detection in personal relationships. The model suggests that in close relationships partners view each other in a more rigid way and distort inconsistent information to support their view. This view increases one's confidence in the ability to make judgments about someone. In addition, individuals within a close relationship tend to hold a positive view of each other, resulting in a bias toward perceiving each other as honest. This presumption of honesty reduces one's suspicion and motivation for accurately detecting lies. DePaulo, Charlton, Cooper, Lindsay, and Muhlenbruck (1997) tested this model in a meta-analysis and found that adults indeed evaluated a friend's and a romantic partner's statements as more truthful than a stranger's statements. Furthermore, the closeness of the relationship was positively correlated with judgment confidence. However, confidence was not significantly related to detection accuracy, suggesting that personal relationships can bias our evaluations of their honesty.

### *Parents' ability to detect children's honesty*

The parent–child relationship is particularly interesting in terms of lie detection given both the closeness of the relationship and the importance of trust for a healthy relationship. During late childhood and into adolescence, gaining a sense of autonomy is one of the key developmental tasks. While asserting autonomy, adolescents may have an increased motivation to be dishonest to conceal their extracurricular activities so as to avoid parental disapproval (Cumsille, Darling, & Martínez, 2010; Finkenauer, Engels, & Meeus, 2002; Jensen, Arnett, Feldman, & Cauffman, 2004; Marshall, Tilton-Weaver, & Bosdet, 2005). However, limited studies have examined parents' ability to detect children's lies (Chahal & Cassidy, 1995; Crossman & Lewis, 2006; Talwar & Lee, 2002; Talwar, Renaud, & Conway, 2015). Chahal and Cassidy (1995) examined parents' and non-parents' ability to detect children's lies about a film they had viewed. Parents were not significantly better than non-parents at detecting lies. More recent studies have further supported these original findings (Crossman & Lewis, 2006; Talwar & Lee, 2002). However, Talwar and Lee (2002) found that parents were significantly more likely to believe children than were undergraduates. This truth bias may stem from parents' beliefs that their own children are honest and, thus, they hold similar expectations for their children's peers. Furthermore, parents likely have more experiences in interacting with children, who they believe are being honest (because they fail to detect their lies), making them less suspicious of false statements.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/917902>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/917902>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)