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BEHAVIOR SYMPTOMS OF LIE-DETECTOR SUBJECTS

John E. Reid and Richard O. Arther

John E. Reid, Director of John E. Reid & Associates, has made a number of noteworthy contributions to the field of lie detection. This is his third article to appear in this Journal. His previous ones were "Simulated Blood Pressure Responses in Lie Detector Tests and a Method for Their Detection" (Vol. 36, No. 1) and "A Revised Questioning Technique in Lie Detection Tests" (Vol. 37, No. 6).

Richard O. Arther is a graduate of Michigan State College with a B.S. degree in Police Administration. In 1951 following his graduation, he pursued the study of scientific lie detection at John E. Reid and Associates for six months, and since then, he has been a member of the staff of that organization.

This paper here presented will appear in the forthcoming third edition of *Lie Detection and Criminal Interrogation* by Fred E. Inbau and John E. Reid.—EDITOR.

Every competent lie-detector examiner must have observed instances where a subject's general conduct and unsolicited statements before, during, and after a test seemed to indicate his guilt or innocence regarding the matter under investigation. In order to make an evaluation of such conduct and statements, a five-year study of a large number of subjects in a variety of case situations was undertaken at the laboratory of John E. Reid and Associates. During this time the behavior reactions and statements of these subjects were closely observed and immediately written into the case file. The final evaluation of the study had to be confined, of course, to the subjects whose guilt or innocence had been verified by trustworthy confessions. In its ultimate analysis the study was based upon observations and data regarding 486 verified guilty and 323 verified innocent subjects who were suspected of various criminal offenses.

The behavior symptoms of the guilty and the innocent were found to differ widely in some respects, while in others they were quite similar. Naturally, no specific type of behavior—even though it is highly typical of one or the other group—should ever be considered proof of guilt or innocence, because there are or may be some exceptions to each general rule. Nevertheless, an examiner will find it helpful at times to consider the probable significance of a subject's behavior pattern.

BEHAVIOR SYMPTOMS OF THE GUILTY

As might be assumed, a guilty subject is usually far from anxious to take a lie-detector test. None of the 486 verified guilty subjects examined during the five-year study period had requested the lie-detector test. In a few instances, however, an effort was made to deceive the examiner into believing that the subject himself was the one who originally suggested the test.

Guilty subjects will frequently attempt to postpone the date for their examination to a later one than that suggested by the investigators. Guilty subjects who are not in custody, as in personnel investigations, also have a characteristic tendency to be late for their test appointment. They also have a tendency to fail to appear at all on the date of their original appointment.

Once in the examining room the guilty person often looks very worried and is highly nervous. This nervousness is manifested in a variety of ways, e.g., acting aggressive, having a bitter attitude, appearing to be in a shocked condition, experiencing mental blocks, being evasive, having an extremely dry mouth, continually sighing or yawning, refusing to look the examiner in the eye, and moving about. Sometimes he is too friendly or too polite.

Guilty subjects repeatedly feel it necessary to explain before the examination why their responses might mislead the examiner into believing that they are lying. Hence, they complain of being nervous, and if that does not seem to impress the examiner, they further emphasize their "nervous condition" or mention a physical defect which they may or may not actually have. Also, they frequently feel it necessary to assure the examiner that they are very religious, hoping that the examiner will dismiss them as innocent because of their alleged righteousness.

Guilty subjects sometimes claim that the apparatus is causing them physical pain. They do this for at least one of several reasons. First, they hope that the examiner will turn off the instrument, remove the apparatus, apologize for the pain that was caused, and report to the investigators that this subject cannot be examined because of his great pain sensitivity. Second, it provides them with an excuse for not sitting still and thereby preventing the examiner from obtaining a suitable recording. Third, they are hoping that the examiner, when interpreting the record, will wrongly decide that their guilt responses are pain responses and report them innocent.

During this five-year research period, it was found that approximately one out of five guilty subjects purposely attempted to distort his lie-detector records so that the examiner could not tell if he were innocent or guilty. Wiggling the toes, applying muscular pressure, moving the arms, coughing, sniffing, yawning, changing the breathing rate, and talking are some of the methods that are used by guilty subjects for this purpose.

Since the entire lie-detector situation is unpleasant to most guilty

subjects, they usually want to leave the examining room as soon as possible. Therefore, they inquire after the first test as to how they came out, ask if the examination is not over yet, complain that the examination is taking much too long, seek a speedy release by alleging that they have another appointment, or refuse to continue with the examination. When leaving they often quickly shake the examiner's hand and hurry out of the laboratory.

BEHAVIOR SYMPTOMS OF THE INNOCENT

Because everyone given a lie-detector examination is suspected of some wrongdoing, innocent subjects are usually very glad to be given an opportunity to prove their innocence. Often they have requested it so that no suspicion will be directed towards them. This belief that the innocent have in the accuracy of the lie-detector, and that they will be exonerated, is usually shown by their attitude. This attitude is one of genuine confidence in both the machine and the examiner. Because of this confidence they regard the examination as an experience they will want to relate to their family and friends.

Innocent subjects may refer to their nervousness, but after the assurance of the examiner that nervousness makes no difference, they are usually convinced and make no further reference to it. Innocent subjects are often at ease, light-hearted, and talkative. However, they are very sincere and their straight-forwardness is displayed when they discuss the case during the interview.

Their attitude is later manifested by their giving complete cooperation during the test. Of the 323 verified innocent subjects, not one of them purposefully attempted to distort his lie-detector records. However, while being cooperative and sincere, innocent subjects are not overly polite or solicitous.

BEHAVIOR SYMPTOMS COMMON TO BOTH GUILTY AND INNOCENT

Some behavior symptoms are exhibited almost equally by both innocent and guilty subjects. Anger is one of these symptoms. However, when the value of the test is properly explained at the beginning of the interview and then demonstrated by a card test, the innocent person usually becomes much more relaxed and jovial. However, the guilty subject often becomes more abusive and argumentative, sometimes to such an extent that he refuses to continue any further with the tests.

Impertinence is similarly shown by both types of subjects, but it is

usually confined to the "teen-age" group. They display this symptom because of resentment against authority and as an effort at bravado. Consequently, little significance can be placed upon this as to guilt or innocence. However, the guilty woman acts impertinent as one of her womanly wiles, which is a defensive mechanism created by the situation and the presence of a male examiner. This trait is occasionally displayed by the innocent woman who is resentful toward the examiner because of his non-belief in her oral plea of innocence. The guilty man is impertinent because he knows he is caught and feels he must show defiance and lack of fear.

Quietness, another behavior symptom common to both, can be generally categorized as to whether it is quietness of the guilty or that of the innocent. The guilty-quiet try to blend in with the surroundings and become as inoffensive as possible. Often they are afraid to speak for fear of trapping themselves. The innocent-quiet are seemingly only quiet because they are either afraid or awed by the situation and are waiting for the interview to begin. When they are relieved, they usually become more responsive and begin to talk quite freely. However, the guilty-quiet subject rarely, if ever, changes from his non-talkative state.

Frequently both types of subjects display interest in the lie-detector. They inquire as to the types of recordings, whether they will receive an electric shock, what the various attachments are for, and whether the examiner can tell them if their blood pressure is high. Also, both occasionally ask if the lie-detector really works. When told it does, the innocent are usually satisfied, while the guilty often make a caustic comment, such as, "But the courts don't think so."

Both the guilty and the innocent alike often make some half-humorous comment when entering the examining room, e.g., "Boy, the electric chair," or, "Now I'll know how the hot seat feels."

CONCLUSION

A definite advantage can be gained from observing and classifying a subject's behavior symptoms. As was mentioned previously, the advantage is not in determining whether he is guilty or innocent, since practically all behavior symptoms are subject to general rule exceptions. The real value comes from the assistance the behavior symptoms give the examiner in determining what a particular subject's attitude is towards the entire lie-detector situation. Thus, the examiner will know whether the card test should be given at the beginning of the interview or at its regular time, what the subject should be told about

the lie-detector and its workings, how the interview should be conducted and, generally, how this subject should be handled. When a subject, regardless of guilt or innocence, is of a certain behavior pattern, he is treated in a certain, specific manner.

If he is a highly nervous person, he must be quieted. If he is angry, he must be appeased. If he is quiet, he must be reassured. When these and similar procedures are followed with the guilty, he will receive no emotional relief when the lie-detector test is made. However, if he is innocent, he will usually be sufficiently relieved by these procedures. In both cases, more easily interpreted lie-detector records will result.

The lie-detector examiner should be able to recognize each subject's various behavior symptoms and then be able to determine the suitable procedure to be followed. If this is properly done, the writers are confident that fewer errors will result and that a substantial reduction in indefinite reports will follow.