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Title: The Psychological Assessment of Deception: Obvious and Subtle Items, Obvious and Subtle Subjects

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**Abstract.** This article provides an analysis of approaches to detecting deception in subjects administered psychological assessment instruments for nondeceptive and/or deceptive purposes.

The psychometric history of attempts to detect deception on psychological assessment instruments involves two key features. First, there's a choice of alleged deception indicators. These indicators may include obvious items--i.e., items whose meaning can easily be interpreted as suggesting a good or bad impression in a particular situation. Or the indicators may include subtle items--i.e., items without such an easy interpretation. Or yet again the indicators may include pure, empirically derived items--i.e., items solely stemming from statistical group differences. Second, there's a choice of comparison groups to evaluate the statistical, clinical, or other such utility of the indicator. These groups often include some combination of subjects who "have a reason to deceive," are told to deceive, or are not told anything. The groups may be further differentiated by social, educational, clinical, or other variants of demographic status.

And the quest to detect deception has had two main vulnerabilities. First, it is based on group differences. Even very significant statistical differences in the endorsement of items between and among groups may not be practically helpful in detecting deception in an individual case--whether making clinical or vocational decisions in a consulting room or providing expert opinion in a court of law. Second, the quest to detect deception has not studied subjects who have studied the psychological assessment instruments to be employed--especially the keys and approaches to detecting deception. While some psychologists may object that this would "contaminate" the results or nullify the instrument's validity, one might counter that the instrument results engendered from assessing such subjects need to be identified and analyzed for the assessor will largely not be aware that a compromise has occurred.

In our global forensic era that finds more and more sensitive information more easily available, the group difference vulnerability can be ever more devastatingly attacked, the subject vulnerability ever more fully exploited. To support those courageous forensic behavioral scientists who are making do with what deception research has to offer, one must develop new analytic modes of induction and deduction from group data and new data bases from subjects who have studied the deceptive keys and approaches of specific psychological instruments. (See Bagby, R.M., Nicholson, R., and Buis, T. (1998). Utility of the deceptive-subtle items in the detection of malingering. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 70, 405-415; Giordo, M. (1997). Undercover agent assessment centers: Crafting vice and virtue for impostors. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 12, 237-260; Lanyon, R.I. detecting deception: Current models and directions. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 4, 377-387; Politics and psychology: Assessment and the law. (October 2, 1998). *IBPP*, 5(14); The political psychology of deception research. (June 27, 1997). *IBPP*, 2(9); The political psychology of deception research II. (September 26, 1997). *IBPP*, 3(9).) (Keywords: Assessment, Deception.)

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